

The Honorable Devin Nunes

Ranking Member

Opening Statement

On its website, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence asserts that the Intelligence Community focuses on “the missions of cyber intelligence, counterterrorism, counterproliferation, counterintelligence, and on the threats posed by state and non-state actors challenging U.S. national security and interests worldwide.”

That’s a concise, accurate description of the Intelligence Community’s mission. The IC is a sprawling group of agencies comprising tens of thousands of people that collectively wield enormous power within our government. They possess extremely sophisticated spying capabilities and, by necessity, they operate without the transparency that is required of most government agencies.

Naturally, this concentration of power, spying capabilities, and lack of transparency creates many opportunities for abuse. And abuses do happen, which is why this committee exists—we were created as an additional level of oversight in response to a raft of IC misdeeds detailed by the Church and Pike committees in the 1970s.

So why do we tolerate such an arrangement in a democratic republic? I believe the American people understand the risks, but they believe the risks are outweighed by the benefits the IC provides—namely, information about our foreign enemies’ intentions and capabilities that will help to protect the American people and defend the security of the homeland.

In short, the Intelligence Community’s mission is to secure information and conduct actions that help to deter our enemies, and when that cannot be done, to help us win wars and other direct conflicts with these enemies.

The IC, however, seems to be increasingly focused on issues that distract from that mission. The indications, ranging from trivial recruitment videos to major intelligence estimates, show an infatuation with leftwing dogmas and politicized actions that have nothing to do with deterring our enemies and winning wars. We see this tendency not just in the Intelligence Community, but throughout the entire national security apparatus—in the military, the State Department, and other bodies. These include:

- The proliferation of seminars given to military service members focusing on the dangers of “white supremacy” and “systemic racism.”
- Fox News host Tucker Carlson allegedly being caught up in NSA surveillance
- The Intelligence Community’s recent release of a National Intelligence Estimate on global warming.

- General Milley defending instruction on critical race theory and “white rage” at West Point.
- State Department communications touting “International Pronoun Day” and “Intersex Awareness Day.”
- The NSA’s improper suspension of former NSA General Counsel Michael Ellis for political reasons.
- The FBI’s provision of false information to the FISA Court to secure warrants to spy on Trump associate Carter Page.

The list goes on and on.

Meanwhile, the international threat matrix does not take a time out as our national security agencies become enthralled by critical race theory and pronoun etiquette. To the contrary, we’re facing an array of pressing challenges, including:

- China’s increasing aggressiveness toward Taiwan, alongside its systematic campaign of intellectual property theft, espionage, currency manipulation, corporate coercion, and cybercrime against the United States.
- China’s testing of a hypersonic missile, which according to press reports, took the Intelligence Community by surprise.
- The continuing fallout from our withdrawal from Afghanistan, including the empowerment of the Taliban and their longtime ties to al Qaeda, the decline in U.S. deterrence capabilities, the loss of intelligence streams, and U.S. citizens and allies who were left behind.
- The spread of ransomware attacks on U.S. targets.
- An unknown number of security threats entering America through our southern border.
- Continuing Russian aggression toward its neighbors.
- Advances in the nuclear weapons programs of North Korea, Iran, and other malign regimes.

Unfortunately, we can’t counter a hypersonic missile launch with better pronoun usage, and a deeper understanding of white rage won’t help rescue Americans stranded in Afghanistan. I’d argue that woke obsessions are the proper jurisdiction of faculty lounge Marxists, not our national security agencies.

The politicization of our national security apparatus is utterly destructive. It has severely eroded trust in institutions that have long received bipartisan support. This effect is predictable and

inevitable—as more Americans conclude that intelligence agencies are just another weapon in domestic political battles, the less willing they are to concede to these agencies the huge power they wield.

The Intelligence Community, the military, and other national security bodies have traditionally been colorblind meritocracies, where the most capable people move up rapidly through the ranks. The effectiveness of these organizations will unavoidably suffer when merit is devalued in favor of any other consideration.

I urge all the directors here today to stay out of politics and concentrate exclusively on deterring our enemies and winning wars. As we learned in Afghanistan, America is not unbeatable. We have real enemies and they mean to do us harm. They have no interest in global warming or race and gender intersectionality—they closely watch us every day to find weaknesses that would enable attacks on our citizens and our homeland. Our defense against them rests, to a large extent, on you, and I hope your priorities will match the urgency of this fraught moment in our history.