



**Statement of
Everette E. Jordan
Director
National Virtual Translation Center**

**Before the
Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
United States Senate**

**Concerning
The Federal Government's Efforts to Develop a Foreign Language Strategy**

January 25, 2007



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Good afternoon Chairman Akaka, Ranking Member Voinovich, and Members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for this opportunity to discuss the National Virtual Translation Center's (NVTC) progress in enhancing the ability of members of the Intelligence Community (IC) and our partners in law enforcement to have accurate translations of critical information to protect the American public. I am happy to join with my colleagues here from the Department of Defense and Department of Education to discuss with you the critical language needs necessary to protect our national security.

The National Virtual Translation Center (NVTC) was established in February, 2003 for the purpose of providing timely and accurate translations of foreign intelligence for all elements of the Intelligence Community. In February of 2003, the Director of Central Intelligence awarded executive agency authority of the NVTC to the Federal Bureau of Investigation and I came to the Center on 11 February, 2003.

The NVTC's goal is to augment existing government translation capabilities by: acting as a clearinghouse for facilitating interagency use of translators; partnering with elements of the U.S. Government, academia, and private industry to identify translator resources and engage their

services; building a nationwide team of highly qualified, motivated linguists and translators, connected virtually to our program Office in Washington, D.C.; and applying state-of-the-art technology to maximize translator efficiency. The NVTC is an interagency element with a small but diverse office staff that comes from different government agencies, academia, and industry and provides expertise and experience in a variety of fields and organizations. The team connects virtually to active duty military personnel, reservists, active and retired government employees, academia, and private industry. The NVTC strives to be innovative, creative, and relevant, as it meets the challenges of today's national security.

The NVTC functions to develop new policies, procedures, and systems for managing NVTC translation requirements and services. We have created a virtual information sharing architecture that connects the translation tasks, language resources, and linguists anywhere in the United States of America. We are seeking to identify and utilize translation resources from the U.S. Government, academia, and private industry. For instance, as a method of ensuring that the vital language applicants to government agencies can be used while their clearances and background investigations are taking place, the NVTC has offered to bring these people aboard and get them working on unclassified overflow material from any one of its 42 Intelligence Community Customers. When the parent agency is ready to bring them on full time, the NVTC releases them. Finally, I would add that we support continued development and fielding of proven Human Language Technologies (HLT), designed to help process and exploit foreign language data.

Most important is who we do this for. Federal agencies decide when to use the translation center. It's almost like a federal contractor. As with most members of the intelligence community, the FBI relies on its own highly trained linguists first. NVTC linguists are used when the FBI faces a critical overload of intelligence, a tight deadline or translation needs in a specific language for which it does not have resources. The center, which provides timely and accurate translations of foreign intelligence for U.S. agencies, isn't organized like a typical government office. Most employees don't report to the same building: They work out of secure government

offices across the nation. Some work from home. They all receive their work electronically, putting the “virtual” in the center’s name.

The NVTC has a shared database that contains up-to-date information on available certified translators to conduct the work of the Center. We offer access to an ever-increasing pool of translation resources that was previously unavailable to the government. The Center is able to offer to our customers flexibility and responsiveness in finding the right translators with the right skills at the right time and national connectivity among elements of the U.S. Government, academia, and the private sector.

The professionals that work for the NVTC are American citizens who have passed a vigorous national security background check; have passed a comprehensive language test; come from all walks of life, including stay-at-home parents and career professionals. These professionals face challenging and varied work assignments and have access to a significant volume of tasks in a variety of languages and topics. The Center offers the flexibility to work full time, part time or as needed, from home or from designated Government facilities, and also provides language tools to facilitate translation efforts. The NVTC has invited members of the American Translators Association (ATA) and the National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators (NAJIT) to participate in this effort to provide translation services at a critical time to our nation’s security.

I would like to conclude by saying that the Center, or NVTC, is an integral part of the national intelligence community. The material is sent to the Center comes from many sources, represents many languages and varies in degrees of sensitivity. But all of the information is important to the U.S. Government’s ability to protect the nation from many threats, both in the homeland and abroad. The Center is working to establish an innovative program to help train future linguists by working with several colleges with translation programs. Schools will receive unclassified documents that need translating and have students do the work. Students will receive grades, school credit, and valuable experience, and the Center will get more documents translated. The NVTC participates in the Foreign Language Executive Committee (FLEXCOM) of the Office of the

Director of National Intelligence (ODNI), and is also a member of the ODNI Foreign Language Working Group. The ODNI provides the bulk of the financial support for the NVTC budget, with FBI acting as Executive Agent. The ODNI has also provided support that had enabled the NVTC to develop advanced tools and technologies to support the IC language community. Major projects have included LANTERN (Language and Technology Resource Nexus), which is a software system to facilitate secure information sharing among language professionals, and the IC Parallel Corpora Database, a joint project with the National Air and Space Intelligence Center, which will enable government agencies to store and retrieve matched sets of documents in the original language with their translations. This database will be invaluable in supporting advances in machine translation as well as providing training material for students of foreign languages.

I thank the Chairman and the Subcommittee for their interest in the important critical need of the nation and look forward to answering any questions you may have.

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