

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE  
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Toward a 21st-century intelligence enterprise

By Ambassador Kenneth C. Brill – McClatchy-Tribune News Service

Late April marks the third anniversary of the most important change in U.S. intelligence since 1947 - the creation of the Office of the Director of National Intelligence. A birthday is a good time to assess progress, so here are some reflections on the impact of this reform, especially on efforts to counter the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Success in countering the development and spread of WMD has always required U.S. intelligence to be at the top of its game. That's never been more true than today. The globalization of technology is expanding opportunities for how, where and by whom chemical, biological and nuclear weapons can be acquired or produced.

Let me give two examples.

-Sophisticated biotechnology is already global, with states on every continent making significant investments in advanced biotech research. Meanwhile, climate change and increasing fossil fuel prices are increasing global demand for nuclear power. Both of these technologies are "dual-use." They can produce vaccines or electricity, but they can be diverted in ways that are often difficult to detect to make weapons.

-No single intelligence agency can deal successfully with an issue that involves complex dual-use technologies, carefully hidden secrets and worldwide sources of supply and transport. Keeping terrorists from acquiring WMD requires U.S. intelligence agencies to excel at rapidly linking collection, analysis and action - all the tools in the intelligence agencies' toolbox.

That's the reason the Office of the Director of National Intelligence was created by Congress and the White House: to knit the nation's 16 intelligence agencies into an integrated enterprise. It's a work in progress - emphasis on progress.

In its first three years, the office prepared the first National Intelligence Strategy for the United States, and is developing an information architecture that cuts across technical barriers and old ways of doing things to bring together the work of all the nation's intelligence collectors.

Under Director Mike McConnell, the office has focused the intelligence budget on the highest national security priorities. Tradecraft has been improved, and analysts from across the spectrum of agencies now use new tools such as Intellipedia, the community's own "wiki," to share items of interest in real time. Personnel policies that require joint training and cross-agency assignments are being put in place. Already, new recruits from a variety of agencies are taking common training courses in basic analysis skills.

Intelligence reform has had special significance for those of us charged with countering the proliferation of WMD. We have knocked down the bureaucratic walls that kept agencies from sharing their most sensitive information. And we've created a new fusion team to combine different agencies' intelligence and focus laser-like on regions of concern.

Similarly, we have developed an "over-the-horizon" project to anticipate future WMD issues. This gives the United States a better chance to check WMD development proliferation before it occurs - true "counter-proliferation."

Other tangible gains are being made. The National Counterproliferation Center is working with the National Counterterrorism Center on new ways to tackle terrorists' efforts to acquire WMD.

We've also beefed up our support of the Treasury Department as it works to cut off the sources of proliferators' financial support. And we're reaching out to other elements in the U.S. government, as well as academia and the private sector, to tackle the full range of biological threats, from biological weapons to pandemics, that the United States may face in the future. This partnership approach represents a significant departure from the past.

The Office of the Director of National Intelligence has collected its share of critics. No one knows better than we who work on WMD issues that substantial work remains to be done. But our enemy, whether another country or a terrorist group, is leveraging globalized technological developments, carefully protecting its secrets and learning from our mistakes. To defeat that kind of foe, U.S. intelligence must be as agile, creative and collaborative as possible.

On the evidence, we've made a good start.

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