

## Law Adapts U.S. Intelligence to Today's World

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When great tragedy strikes a nation, it is incumbent upon that nation's government to examine its failures and its successes, to look to the future for what challenges may be in store, and to redirect its efforts to address those challenges. In the past century, two massive intelligence failures -- the attack on Pearl Harbor and the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001 -- have forced America to overhaul its mechanisms for intelligence and security.

In response to Pearl Harbor, Congress enacted the National Security Act of 1947, which established the Central Intelligence Agency, the Department of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to prevent similar attacks and to confront the growing challenges of the Cold War.

On Dec. 7, 2004, the 63rd anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor, the U.S. House of Representatives responded to the lessons learned from another "date which will live in infamy," Sept. 11. By a 336-75 vote, the House passed comprehensive intelligence-reform legislation that was based largely on the recommendations of the Sept. 11 commission.

The reforms in this bill attempt to correct the failings of our national intelligence agencies in September 2001, and reorganize those agencies to better equip them for the challenge of confronting global terrorism. The primary focus of the reforms is to create a comprehensive, interlocking system of intelligence and to improve communication and information sharing between the various agencies.

Important reforms include:

- A new director of national intelligence to oversee all intelligence gathering and analysis.
- The creation of national intelligence centers focused on counterterrorism and weapons of mass destruction.
- Personnel-management changes to establish a joint, collaborative culture within the intelligence community.
- A new information-sharing environment for counterterrorism linking intelligence, law enforcement and homeland

security information.

The bill also includes a proposal I offered in the intelligence committee to strengthen the quality of analysis in National Intelligence Estimates. The NIE is the ultimate document offered to the president and Congress to evaluate threats to our national security.

This transformation of our intelligence community was not considered lightly, nor are most of these reforms new proposals. The structure and operations of our nation's intelligence have remained essentially unchanged since the implementation of the National Security Act of 1947, but the nature of the threats to our country has changed considerably. No longer is nuclear attack from the Soviet bloc a source of concern. The Cold War ended over a decade ago, and yet our national intelligence apparatus remained organized according to the principles established at its onset.

The legislation passed by Congress is not perfect, and we will need to strengthen some of the provisions that were weakened to secure swift enactment of the broader plan. For instance, the director of national intelligence should have broader authority over all intelligence programs, including the clear ability to dismiss the heads of intelligence agencies and to shift budget authority among these agencies. Congress should also have stronger oversight authority over the intelligence community. These are issues for the next Congress, but this legislation will ensure that our intelligence agencies have a better opportunity to detect and intercept terrorist plots and other threats to our national security.

Ultimately, our safety and security depend on the people that we entrust to protect us -- as the Sept. 11 commission said in its report, "The most important failure (of Sept. 11) was one of imagination" on the part of our leaders. However, we owe it to the intelligence community and to the American people to create a system designed to avoid failure and to provide the president, Congress and the military with the best intelligence possible.

These changes have not been achieved easily and many powerful interests -- including the Pentagon -- have been overcome. But thanks to the inspiration of the families of the Sept. 11 victims, the extraordinary work of the bipartisan Sept. 11 commission and the resolve of the American people, we have accomplished landmark reforms to our intelligence community that will make us safer and protect our national security.

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