

Clapper Was ‘Risk-Taker, Visionary and Leader’—Tenet

Former Director of Central Intelligence George J. Tenet was the guest speaker at the Change of Authority ceremony June 13 for NGA Director retired Air Force Lt. Gen. James R. Clapper Jr. Excerpts of his remarks follow:

It is both a pleasure and a special privilege for me today to be here to honor a man ... who has done more than his fair share to make sure that the Intelligence Community remains the first line of defense for the United States.

For over 40 years Jim Clapper has touched virtually every part of the business of intelligence. As an intelligence officer Jim has mastered the mundane and the extraordinary, the simple and the complex. He has done this with an eye to innovation and an ear to the voices of those he has led.

And this is the most important point I will make today: Jim Clapper has been ... a model of what leaders must be: risk-takers and visionaries, who lead from the front, take responsibility, instill trust, teach and always take care of those around them.

It is true that Jim Clapper fundamentally understands the modern intelligence business because he has spent so many years helping to develop it and shape it. He has also always known how to get the best out of fantastic people.

Jim Clapper served the nation during great times of need. As you all know, he was appointed the Director of NIMA [National Imagery and Mapping Agency], now NGA, just two days after 9/11. Think about it. Two days. He reported for work while the smoke and the sadness and the twisted metal of that terrible day were still with us. It's not an easy thing to be placed in charge of an intelligence agency

under any circumstances. To take on the job a matter of hours after such a national trauma is harder still.

Jim more than rose to the challenge. I can tell you he didn't wait around for the reports of commissions before he began forging greater cohesion in our Intelligence Community. He set out immediately to make his Agency a leader in the effort to build collaboration across agencies that is essential to our success.

Mike Hayden [CIA Director Gen. Michael V. Hayden] very much wanted to be here today to honor his friend and mentor. If he were here at this point Mike would say that while he favored moving NSA [the National Security Agency] and NGA closer, Jim Clapper imposed collaboration on him early in office. On Jim's watch NGA established a "geo-cell," a support group housed in NSA, and he championed an NGA presence at each of NSA's regional SIGINT [signals intelligence] operation centers. He knew early on that collaboration in the production of intelligence needed to begin nearly at the point of collection. This kind of thinking led to intelligence products that have come to be recognized as extremely effective, products that offer a multidimensional-intelligence picture and products that have helped to make this country much safer.

Some of our allies are using these very same programs as models for creating their own fusion centers. They may even begin to merge their fusion centers with our own. At that point a great diversity of expertise will be brought to bear on the intelligence problems that we and our allies face. This is indeed the future. This is Jim Clapper's vision of the future ...

Jim may best be known, though, as the GEOINT [geospatial intelligence] visionary. His insight, hard work and commitment to creating and building this new discipline have given us a new and more sophisticated way to think about intelligence problems. The melding of imagery intelligence with the many layers and aspects of geospatial data has created a powerful intelligence instrument. With this service alone, the nation owed him a great debt of thanks.

Under Jim's leadership, your geospatial intelligence support and services, your pictures, your maps, your products integrated in the way Jim insisted they be are truly worth the proverbial thousand words to the leaders of this country.

As adroit as Jim was in quickly adapting to and mastering the traditional national security challenges, it was another set of crises, this time the Gulf hurricanes of 2005, that further revealed the depth and creativity of his vision. NGA's focus, as

always, was on saving lives and helping Americans here at home to put their devastated communities back in order. Jim's masterful response to the disasters might seem in hindsight to have been the most natural course of action, but to quickly grasp how specific technologies could lend themselves to a recovery operation, to offer us products for public use in responding to an overwhelming humanitarian stratagem were absolutely far from obvious to many, but not to Jim...

Jim, I always knew with you at the helm that NGA would blossom and grow into the great organization that it is today. I always knew that you would speak your mind and always be there back to back like a brother when it got tough. I thank you for your friendship and your loyalty...

I know that everyone here salutes you for what you have done for all of us, and simply say may God always bless you and your family, and thank you for what you've done for our country...

Former Director of Central Intelligence George Tenet was the guest speaker at the Change of Authority ceremony on June 13.

