



# NATIONAL GEOSPATIAL-INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Office of Corporate Communications

nga.mil | 571-557-5400 | publicaffairs@nga.mil | FB: NatlGEOINTAgency | @NGA\_GEOINT

**Remarks as Prepared for  
Letitia A. Long  
Director, National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency  
for the  
Women in Defense, Greater Tampa Bay Chapter  
April 16, 2014**

**“Surviving and Thriving in Uncertain Times”**

---

Good afternoon! As I said yesterday morning, we made it – finally! It has been a long, cold winter in Virginia, so I am happy to be here in warm, sunny Tampa with you.

First, I would like to thank President Trudy Daniels for her kind introduction. And I would especially like to recognize Dr. Lisa Monnet for very graciously inviting me to speak to you. I congratulate you as a new chapter of Women in Defense. As I understand it, you are only about a year old, yet you already have more than 200 active members.

You are inspiring women in the greater Tampa Bay community, growing professional relationships, and advancing the status of women across the defense community. I am honored to be here today because – despite the shutdown last fall – you persevered and made this event happen. I congratulate you on your strength as a chapter.

You truly exemplify the theme for this year’s national Women in Defense organization: Surviving and Thriving in Uncertain Times! As you know, the role of women in the defense community has experienced many remarkable changes since Women in Defense was formed in 1979. Women have taken on virtually every role in the military services, including distinguished service and sacrifice in combat. Women have risen to the rank of 4-star in three of the four Services. We have Christine Fox as Acting Deputy Secretary of Defense. We have had two women Under Secretaries of Defense with a third pending confirmation.

And women have held the number one or two positions in 12 of the 17 organizations in the Intelligence Community. Including Betty Sapp, Director of the NRO – who is here with us today. We are also fortunate to have here with us today Maria Fernandez, my Australian counterpart and Director of the Australian GEOINT organization. Welcome Mara!

And look around this room! Everyone here is a fine example of the progress we have made in the military, government, industry, and academia. Perhaps most importantly, we have reached a point where it is now “normal” for women to hold command, management, and senior positions across the defense establishment. Perhaps soon we

can stop talking about the “first this and the first that,” and get on with the business of leading our organizations!

Just as these women – and you – have “survived and thrived in uncertain times,” the Agency I lead has also survived and thrived since its founding. We at NGA have done so despite the constant demands of rapidly evolving threats and severely constrained budgets.

NGA is both a national intelligence agency and a Department of Defense combat support agency. We provide timely, accurate, relevant geospatial intelligence or GEOINT. Simply put, everything has a time and a place on the earth – a geo-reference. NGA’s job as the GEOINT leader is to understand the what, when, where, how, why, and what’s next – about everything that affects national security.

As I said yesterday, as the GEOINT leader, NGA is driving the Intelligence Community into the next phrase of intelligence – immersion. By immersion, I mean living, interacting, and experimenting with data in a multimedia, multi-sensory experience with GEOINT as its core. As we move into the next phase during these uncertain times, the character, courage, and commitment of NGA’s people advance our diverse missions.

This is especially true of our thousands of women civilians, military, and contractors. Whether they serve the decision maker, the warfighter, or the first responder, every NGA employee has driven NGA to not just survive, but to thrive.

Today, I want to encourage each of you personally—and this chapter as a group—to seize three opportunities:

- To support women veterans,
- To redouble your efforts to encourage women to launch STEM careers (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics), and above all
- To have courage. To take your rightful place in your own organizations and empower other women.

More than ever before, women veterans need our support. According to the Pew Research Center, women are the fastest growing segment of the veteran population. As the Afghan war winds down and the cutbacks begin to bite, women veterans need education and jobs as well as support for their unique issues. Their challenges range from recovering from severe wounds to caring for growing families. We owe these women veterans our support, and we at NGA are fulfilling our commitment.

We employ hundreds of women veterans. They serve in many professions—from police officers to project scientists to photogrammetric analysts. We also have an active Wounded Warrior internship program that aids wounded women veterans. And we want to hire more women veterans for reasons that directly address the second opportunity – closing the STEM career gap.

NGA has a strong commitment to closing the gap in STEM careers. We need the skills sets of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics to achieve the next phase of immersive intelligence:

- Advanced visualization specialists,
- Data scientists, and
- Imagery Scientists, to name a few.

I, for one, hope the Geospatial Revolution happening in our everyday lives encourages young women – and men – to enter college STEM programs and pursue STEM careers.

Yet, women often fail to believe in their ability to succeed not only in STEM professions but also in management and senior executive positions. We often sell ourselves short – we take ourselves out the running, believing that we are not qualified or not the best qualified for the next promotion. We can turn this mindset around by seizing my third opportunity. It is simply – To have courage!

Have the courage to turn challenge into opportunity, and take calculated risks. I would like to share with you a brief story about how as a new Senior executive, I learned the meaning of having courage. And by taking a risk, I changed my career forever.

I was working for the Director of Naval Intelligence where I had managed R&D programs for a number of years. I had just been promoted to the senior executive service and had started a new job. Three months later, a new Admiral was appointed as the Director of Naval Intelligence. The day before he was to start the job, he informed me that he was assigning someone junior to me as my superior. He assured me that the arrangement would work out and that I would learn a lot from my new boss.

But I was concerned that this arrangement would be awkward for both of us, might diminish my role, and might impact not only my career, but the careers of other women in Naval Intelligence. I reached out to a number of my mentors, to include my parents. My mother said, “He can’t do that! You march right into his office and demand your job back.” My Dad – being a 30-year government civilian – was a bit more pragmatic. He suggested that I should negotiate and work my way through the problem. As I thought about the situation over the weekend, I received a phone call from Joan Dempsey.

At the time, she was a DIA senior executive – and already highly regarded throughout the Intelligence Community. Let me stress that at the time, I did not know her. She said she had heard about my dilemma. She told me she had an opportunity for me in a senior executive position at DIA. I said, “Well, I don’t know. Let me think about it.”

And she said, “You don’t understand. You have an interview with General Clapper tomorrow morning.”

I was a bit taken aback. I said, “Oh! Well, okay...I’ll be there.”

Without saying so, Joan encouraged me to believe in myself and have the courage to do the job. She helped me see that I could do more than I thought I could do. I am sorry that Joan could not be with us today. She has been – and continues to be – a role model for many of us and a trailblazer for all of us. To finish the story, the next day, I interviewed with then-DIA Director Lt. Gen. Clapper and started the new job about a week later. That opportunity at DIA opened the door to the much greater opportunities that have led me to where I am today.

Since leaving Naval Intelligence in 1994, I have served in seven senior positions in five different organizations across the intelligence and defense communities. At every level, I have gained broader and deeper experience. Everything I have learned has been valuable. Every job has helped prepare me for the next one – eventually bringing me to NGA. When I have been willing to have courage and turn challenge into opportunity, everything has worked out for the best.

My story is just one example of the many ways that thousands of women – like all of you here today – have the courage to thrive. All of you have shown the courage to make a critical difference wherever you work. Now, it is time for us to pay forward what we have gained. It is time for us to encourage other women to step out of their comfort zones. It is time for us to challenge our mentees to reach for something better than they think they can do. Like us, they will earn their seat at the table by having courage, working hard – and smart, and delivering positive results.

In conclusion, by having courage – by standing together – and by paying it forward to the next generation, we will not only survive, we will thrive. Thank you. Now I would be pleased to take a few questions.

**END**