



NATIONAL GEOSPATIAL-INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Office of Corporate Communications

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**Remarks as Prepared for
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for the
Leadership Summit for Women in National Security Careers
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Good morning! Thank you, Patricia, for that kind introduction and for your continued support for women leaders in the Intelligence Community, industry and academia. I would like to thank Carol (Evans) and Working Mother Media for inviting me to serve as the Honorary Chairwoman of the 2014 Leadership Summit for Women in National Security Careers, and for hosting this forum, now in its fifth year. It is a great honor and privilege.

This forum provides a great opportunity to bring leaders within the national security community together to discuss current challenges and opportunities for women in our field — to focus on the future and connect with one another. It is an excellent way for leaders from many segments of the community—military, intelligence, homeland security, industry and academia—to share expertise and learn strategies to expand our impact.

As women, we bring a unique perspective to the decision making process. Our diversity of thought, varied experiences and unique insights propel innovation and often further discussions on alternative courses of action. We bring candor and a connectedness that allows for inclusion of all ideas, which ultimately results in better decision-making. Just look at the progress that has been made.

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.

And now just look around this room! Everyone here is an 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 be leaders, technical experts, and administrators across the national security 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!

Since 2010, I have been honored to lead the women and men of the National

Geospatial Intelligence Agency. As both a national intelligence agency and a Department of Defense combat support agency, NGA provides timely, accurate, relevant geospatial intelligence or GEOINT. It is an organization where women and mothers have been and are trailblazers and leaders. I would like to tell you about a few of these women.

Consider the story of Bea McPherson – one of the first female mapmakers to serve in the Army Map Service during the Second World War. She was part of a group of women who eventually became known as the Military Mapmaking Corps, sometimes called the Military Mapmaking Maidens or the 3Ms.

I had the distinct pleasure of spending some time with Bea and her daughter in January of this year. Currently in her 90s, she remains vibrant, and is so very committed and dedicated to the great work that she and her colleagues did during the Second World War.

Also consider Roberta “Bobbi” Lenczowski, an esteemed photogrammetrist and remote sensing expert who served at NGA and its predecessor organizations for more than 28 years. This mother of six, she held a number of senior executive positions within our agency. She is still very active in professional organizations and recently received a lifetime achievement award from the United States Geospatial Intelligence Foundation.

Then there is Ellen McCarthy, our chief operating officer and mother of two who will moderate a panel later this morning. In addition to being the Number three at NGA, raising two beautiful children, being active in her church and President of the PTA, she still finds time to work out!

These are but a few examples of women who have demonstrated professional courage to step beyond traditional assignments to seek greater responsibility and made a point to stretch professionally.

Today, I want to encourage each of you, personally, to seize two opportunities to create a culture of inclusion. Redouble your efforts to encourage women to launch careers in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics), and above all to have courage and be trailblazers like Bea (McPherson) and Bobbi Lenczowski). To take your rightful place in your own organizations and empower other women.

NGA has a strong commitment to closing the gap in STEM careers. You may not know that I have two degrees in engineering—a bachelor’s in electrical engineering from Virginia Tech and a master’s in mechanical engineering from Catholic University. I worked as a college research intern with the David Taylor Naval Research Laboratory and spent my first six years in intelligence analyzing acoustic signatures. I know firsthand that STEM careers are critical to NGA’s future success, as well as the future success of the Intelligence Community overall.

As the current generation retires, we also need geospatial analysts, program managers and many more. We need to recruit the best, brightest brains available, regardless of

race, creed, gender or physical impairment. The next phase of immersive intelligence demands Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics skills for such positions as: Advanced Visualization Specialists, Data Scientists, and Imagery Scientists, to name a few.

STEM feeds GEOINT, and GEOINT is an important part our daily lives. We are in the middle of a geospatial revolution where it's no longer enough to know where we are – we need to know where we are with respect to everything else. I, for one, hope this revolution 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 of 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 second 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 Office of Naval Intelligence where I had managed research and development – R&D – programs for several 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, who some of you may know.

At the time, she was a DIA senior executive—and 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 Monday morning. So brush up your resume and get over here.” I was taken aback. I said, “Oh! Well, okay...I'll see you Monday morning.”

Without saying so, Joan encouraged me to believe in myself and step up to the challenge. She helped me see that I could do more than I thought I could do. To finish the story, the next Monday morning, I interviewed with then-DIA Director Lt. Gen. Clapper and started the new job about a week later. And as Robert Frost said so well, taking the road less traveled has made all the difference.

At DIA, that opportunity 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 defense community. One of those included returning to Naval Intelligence as Deputy Director—working for the man I was supposed to report to!

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.

As current leaders, you and I have a responsibility to mentor the young professionals in our organization and the Community. I have had many mentors, both male and female, who have supported my career, and as my mentors have provided valuable guidance to me, we must give back to young professionals because they will have many opportunities in their own careers to make a decisive difference. They will look to us for guidance as role models of how to respond in critical circumstances.

I urge you to take the time today to find new mentees, expand your own network of mentors, and begin the dialogue on which good relationships are built. Like us, they will earn their seat at the table by having courage, working hard – and smart, and by delivering results.

In conclusion, let us remember that our challenges are small compared to those faced by the millions of women around the world who have suffered—and continue to suffer—oppression, poverty and terror. Despite all the troubles that women have faced through the generations and all we will face in the future, we have made great strides forward.

By the end of today, you will have shaped new relationships, and will leave with a personal action plan. Use that plan to step up to the opportunities that you will find – or that will find you – in your organizations. By having courage - by standing together - and by paying it forward to the next generation, we are creating a culture of inclusion – we are the Women's Advancement Imperative.

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