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Subject: draft 4 (President has copy)
Received(Date): Wed, 16 Feb 2005 16:33:37 -0500
[NegroponteNomination17February2005#4.doc](#)

Nomination of Director of National Intelligence

Thursday, February 17, 2005

Draft #4

Thank you all for coming. Today I'm pleased to announce my decision to nominate Ambassador John Negroponte as Director of National Intelligence. The director's responsibility is straightforward and demanding: John will make sure that those whose duty it is to defend America have the information we need to make the right decisions. John understands America's global intelligence needs because he's spent the better part of his life in our Foreign Service – and is now serving with distinction in the sensitive post of our Nation's first Ambassador to a free Iraq.

John's nomination comes at a historic moment for our intelligence services. In the war against terrorists who target innocent civilians and continue to seek weapons of mass murder, intelligence is our first line of defense. If we are going to stop terrorists before they strike – we must ensure that our 15 intelligence agencies work as a single, unified enterprise. That is why I supported, and Congress passed, reform legislation creating the new job of Director of National Intelligence.

As DNI, John will lead a unified intelligence community and will serve as the principal advisor to the President on intelligence matters. He will have the authority to order the collection of new intelligence to ensure the sharing of information among agencies and to establish common standards for the intelligence community's personnel. It will be John's responsibility to determine the annual budgets for all national intelligence agencies and offices and to direct how these funds are spent. Vesting these authorities

in a single official who reports directly to me will make all our intelligence efforts better coordinated, more efficient, and more effective.

The Director of the CIA will report to John. The CIA will retain its core of responsibilities for collecting human intelligence, analyzing intelligence from all sources, and supporting American interests abroad at the direction of the President.

The law establishing John's position preserves the existing chain of command and leaves all our intelligence agencies, organizations, and offices in their current Departments. Our military commanders will continue to have quick access to the intelligence they need to achieve victory on the battlefield. And the new structure will help ensure greater information sharing among federal departments and agencies and also with appropriate state and local authorities.

John brings a unique set of skills to these challenges. Over the course of a long career, John has served his Nation in eight countries spanning three continents. He has held important leadership posts at both the State Department and the White House. As my representative to the United Nations, John defended our interests vigorously and spoke eloquently about America's intention to spread freedom and peace throughout the world. And his service in Iraq during these past few historic months has given him something that will prove an incalculable advantage for an intelligence chief: an unvarnished and up-close look at a deadly enemy.

Today I'm also pleased to announce that that joining John as his deputy will be Lieutenant General Michael Hayden. A career Air Force intelligence officer, General Hayden now serves as director of the National Security Agency – America's largest intelligence service – and chief of the Central Security Service. In these critical roles, he has already demonstrated an ability to adapt our intelligence services to meet the new threats of a new century.

I appreciate the willingness of these men to take on these tough new assignments at an extraordinary moment in our Nation's history. And I'd like to thank the thousands of men and women already serving in our intelligence services. These are people who go to work each day to keep Americans safe in a dangerous world – often at great risk to their own lives – and they will be pleased to have leaders such as Ambassador Negroponte and General Hayden. I thank John for being here today, and am happy to take any questions you might have.

Drafted by: Bill McGurn, Office of Speechwriting

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