

**Mr. Patrick Hovakimian**

Nominee for the Position of  
General Counsel, Office of the Director of National Intelligence

Statement for the Record  
Before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence

July 22, 2020

Acting Chairman Rubio, Vice Chairman Warner, and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for taking the time this morning to consider my nomination to serve as General Counsel for the Office of the Director of National Intelligence. I am honored to appear before you today.

I also extend my thanks to the President for the opportunity to serve, to Director Ratcliffe for his confidence in me, and to my current bosses, Attorney General Bill Barr and Deputy Attorney General Jeff Rosen, for their support throughout this nomination process.

Acting Chairman Rubio and Vice Chairman Warner, I am a first-generation American and a proud civil servant. My background and family experiences shape who I am today and compel me to put my hand up when called upon to serve. This great Country of ours has given me everything. My parents, Eric Ara Hovakimian and Lida Hovakimian, came to the San Francisco Bay Area, built a life, raised two boys, and instilled in me a deep appreciation of the freedom and rights our Country provides, and an equally strong duty to serve. Without their love and support, I simply would not be here today. I thank my mom, who is watching from home; my dad, who I know is watching from above; my entire extended family; and the many close friends – both from back home in California and those from later in life – who have supported me and lived life beside me through the years. Many wrote, called, and expressed a wish to be here today. To them I say thank you, and I will do my very best not only today, but always, to make you proud.

I've been fortunate in my career. After graduation from law school, I joined an international law firm, where I worked alongside and learned from some of the finest lawyers anywhere in the world. And after a few years at the law firm and after clerking for Judge J.L. Edmondson of the Eleventh Circuit, I accepted what I thought could well be the last job I ever

had. As an Assistant U.S. Attorney in San Diego, I worked alongside talented federal agents and prosecutors, building cases from the ground up. I handled matters in diverse contexts and across the federal criminal code, including investigating international drug trafficking organizations and white-collar and public-corruption matters. For the last couple of years I served as a prosecutor, I worked primarily on a series of cases involving a former foreign defense contractor, his firm, and the United States Navy.

Investigating and litigating this multinational defense procurement fraud and bribery series of cases was rewarding work, to say the least. It implicated our national security interests and those of our military. Working hand-in-hand with law enforcement agents and military personnel, it felt like we were standing up for the interests of the United States. It felt righteous, because it was.

I look back on those days fondly, and I carry the experiences with me. They motivate me to continue to serve. Just as I have great respect for the dedicated professionals who comprise our federal law enforcement agencies, I have tremendous respect for the members of our Intelligence Community. They too do righteous work. They work, every day, on behalf of the United States, often in unheralded if not completely anonymous ways. I am here because I want to support them and their mission. I am here because I want to do what I can, particularly at this consequential time, to ensure that the women and men of the IC get the support they need to help keep our Country safe and secure.

I've seen the intelligence community's work in action. Serving as the Department of Justice's director of Counter-Transnational Organized Crime, I was an avid consumer of IC products. FBI and CIA briefings on counternarcotics efforts, terrorism finance, country-specific and region-specific threats, and the various interconnections between nation-states and organized

crime around the globe. As I worked to implement the substance of these briefings into action, I experienced firsthand the value the IC provides and the mission-critical nature of the work they do.

I've also seen firsthand the way the law interacts with the activities of the Intelligence Community. As an Associate Deputy Attorney General, I regularly participate in counterintelligence and counterterrorism briefings, consult on operational matters, and review investigation and litigation strategy in national-security cases.

The General Counsel position that I have been nominated for is at its core, of course, a legal job. In addition to the everyday tasks that any chief legal officer would perform, I regard the overarching duties of the ODNI General Counsel to be, in principal, threefold.

First, the General Counsel must speak truth to decision makers. Everything else flows from that basic proposition. The only legal advice I will ever give is that which comports entirely with the Constitution of the United States and the laws of the United States. Even when it results in outcomes or advice that others may not want to hear, I will only ever deliver what I consider to be lawful, objective, clear, and complete advice and counsel. My oath to the Constitution, if I'm confirmed, would require it, and my professional judgment and moral compass demand it.

Second, the General Counsel must promote transparency because the IC is statutorily obligated to keep Congress fully and currently informed of intelligence activities. For me, cultivating a relationship with the congressional intelligence committees is of paramount importance. Congressional oversight provides the American people, through their elected representatives, a channel through which to review and to evaluate. Specifically with regard to the intelligence activities of the IC, thorough and robust congressional oversight is vitally

important. The IC engages in activities critical to the national security of the United States and with implications on many of the other important values – civil liberties and privacy, for example – that we as Americans rightly prize. As such, the congressional intelligence committees must have direct and thorough oversight of the IC’s intelligence activities and practices. If confirmed, I will work with the Director and other senior leadership to facilitate and maintain a cooperative process and relationship with this Committee.

Third, the General Counsel is uniquely situated to promote collaboration across IC legal offices, and should do so. Consistent with and in furtherance of the ODNI’s intelligence-integration mission, close collaboration among IC general counsel offices is essential to ensure IC activities are conducted lawfully and to protect the full panoply of statutory rights for IC employees. The General Counsel should take a leading role in promoting this collaboration. If confirmed, I will attempt to do just that.

Public service is a high privilege. I remember standing in court and saying, for the first time, “Good morning your Honor. Patrick Hovakimian, on behalf of the United States.” That feeling never got old. If I am confirmed, I’ll have a different but similarly significant opportunity to serve. I look forward, if confirmed, to leading ODNI’s Office of the General Counsel and working together with the talented professionals of the Intelligence Community.

Acting Chairman Rubio, Vice Chairman Warner, and Members of the Committee, thank you for your consideration of my nomination. I look forward to your questions.