

Statement for the Record
Senate Select Committee on Intelligence

CIA Inspector General Nominee Peter M. Thomson

June 24, 2020

Acting Chairman Rubio, Vice Chairman Warner, and Distinguished Members of the Committee: I am honored to appear before you today as the President's nominee to be the Inspector General (IG) of the Central Intelligence Agency. I would like to thank Senators Bill Cassidy and John Kennedy for introducing me this morning and for their kind words. I also want to thank President Trump and CIA Director Gina Haspel for the confidence they have placed in me with regard to this important position. Further, I appreciate, and am deeply grateful, to those individuals who wrote or signed the letters in support of my nomination. And last, but certainly not least, joining me today are my dear wife Patricia, and my daughter Kaylin. I wish to thank them for their patience and unwavering love and support throughout this process.

Although I spent the majority of my government career in the U.S. Department of Justice, I have always held a deep respect and profound admiration for the men and women of CIA and the important work they do pre-empting threats to our nation. The CIA has the critical responsibility of collecting, analyzing, evaluating and disseminating accurate and timely foreign intelligence to the President, the National Security Council, the military, members of Congress, and other senior policymakers and consumers. And, as you know, the CIA has the responsibility of conducting covert actions, when necessary.

I believe officers who serve at the CIA, including those who serve in the Office of Inspector General, regardless of background, political affiliation or philosophical beliefs, are united at their core by a deep love of our country and a strong desire and commitment to protect the American people. So, for me, it is a deep honor, one beyond words, to be considered for such an important position within the CIA and to be given the opportunity, if confirmed, to lead the dedicated and patriotic officers of the Office of the Inspector General.

Growing up in New Orleans, I was blessed to have devoted and loving parents who taught me important values which are foundational requirements of an Inspector General. My mom grew up very poor, raised on a small farm on the banks of the Mississippi River. She was Sicilian, so I grew up eating lots of Italian food, but also spending lots of time at her family's farm, which we called "the country." My mom had an exceptionally strong constitution, and was known to fiercely defend right in the face of wrong. She taught me the importance of family, and loyalty, and how to pick your friends, which had everything to do with character. And she taught me the importance of standing firm in one's righteous convictions. I didn't know it then, but she was teaching me how to speak truth to power.

Now, my father also grew up poor, raised by his widowed mother in New Orleans. At age 21, following the attack on Pearl Harbor, he enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Corps and was trained to be a heavy bomber pilot. He flew 35 combat missions over Germany in a B-17 Flying Fortress, named "Ole Blood and Guts," fighting the malignant human evils of his generation. After being honorably discharged, he went to Tulane Law School with the help of the G.I. Bill, graduated Order of the Coif, a high honor, and became a successful attorney. My father taught me and modeled many of the same values as my mom. My father also kindled my interest in law, taught me about the rule of law, and why it must be respected. And without a doubt my strong sense of patriotism derives from my father's sacrifices during World War II.

I tell you this, to offer a glimpse into my roots, in order to give you and the American people insight as to how I will perform as CIA Inspector General. If I am confirmed, I feel the principles and values instilled in me by my parents—honesty, integrity, patriotism, speaking truth to power, the rule of law and standing firm in one's just convictions—together with my faith, will serve the CIA, the intelligence oversight committees and the American public well. It is my belief that those important principles must guide the work of the Inspector General's Office.

There is another central requirement, probably the most important requirement of an Inspector General's Office. It is independence. Although the CIA Inspector General reports to the CIA Director and is accountable to Congress, the IG must independently plan and execute all of its oversight work with regard to the Agency. The CIA IG enabling statute requires it.

Independence, in my view, means that the work of the Inspector General must be performed in an unbiased and impartial manner, free of undue or inappropriate influences. By law, no one can force the Inspector General to alter its work product. Should I be confirmed, I can say with absolute confidence that doing the work of the IG in an unbiased and impartial manner will be my top priority.

I believe that independence of the Inspector General's Office is crucial to its proper functioning, and is essential to the integrity of the Office. This, however, does not mean that the IG's Office may not consult with others outside the Office, or that it cannot work cooperatively with Agency leadership or this Committee. In my view, in addition to all of the IG's legal reporting requirements, a collaborative team approach within the Agency and with Congress is as important to the proper functioning of the Inspector General as is the requirement of IG independence. Even so, the buck stops at the door of the IG.

Together with my character and values, I believe my professional background and corresponding skill sets have prepared me for this position. During my 23 year career with the U.S. Department of Justice, I obtained broad investigative and prosecutorial experience handling a wide variety of cases, including investigations involving fraud, national security, violent crimes, drug trafficking, racketeering and political corruption. I held a top secret security clearance for approximately 15 years which allowed for me to work on very sensitive and high priority matters. I also worked with a myriad of federal, state and local agencies, including Offices of Inspectors General, and countless confidential informants and cooperating individuals, rooting out crime, fraud, and abuse in a wide variety of contexts.

While assigned to the Justice Department's Organized Crime Strike Force and the Federal Drug Enforcement Task Force, I supervised, coordinated and worked on many multi-agency and multi-state task force investigations, including investigations involving international narcotics and smuggling. In the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, I was detailed to the FBI where I worked on the Katrina Fraud Task Force, which targeted all kinds of Katrina related fraud and corruption.

After focusing largely on foreign and domestic criminal investigations and prosecutions, ten years ago I was given the opportunity to spend time working in the intelligence community after being selected for the Justice Department's Leadership Excellence Achievement Program, a one-year long program focused on developing executive core qualifications and leadership abilities. As part of this program, I had the opportunity to work on detail at the National Security Agency, where, as part of my duties, I provided legal guidance on certain signals intelligence and information assurance operations of the NSA. After retiring from the Justice Department, I entered private legal practice, where I continued to handle criminal matters, as well as civil matters and internal investigations involving fraud, including most recently a case involving a \$1 billion dollar bank failure.

All of my experience as a federal prosecutor has a direct impact on how I will approach the job as CIA IG but perhaps none more important than my extensive work with numerous confidential informants and cooperators. This experience has given me a deep understanding of the importance of protecting CIA employees and contractors who report wrongdoing to the Inspector General. I believe that one of the most important, if not the most important program within any Inspector General's Office, is the whistleblower program. As Inspector General, if confirmed, I will work with Agency leadership to maintain and strengthen a culture of trust for Agency employees and contractors who have information exposing fraud, waste or abuse, violation of law, or other deficiencies or problems that should be corrected within the Agency. I will also work to maintain and, where appropriate, improve and strengthen all of the component programs and policies which define the CIA IG's whistleblower program.

Finally, I'll conclude with a solemn promise before this Committee and the American public. If confirmed, I will protect the independence of the CIA Inspector General's Office and approach all of its work with honesty, integrity, fairness, and impartiality. If you entrust me with this critical role, I look forward to working with this Committee to fulfill its oversight obligations of the CIA.

Thank you for this opportunity, and I look forward to your questions.