

**SELECT COMMITTEE ON
INTELLIGENCE**

UNITED STATES SENATE



Post-Hearing Questions for the Record for

Aaron Lukas

Upon his nomination to be

Principal Deputy Director of National Intelligence

Questions from Senators Heinrich and Wyden

DNI Gabbard's Director's Initiatives Group (DIG)

On April 8, *The Washington Post* reported that the Director of National Intelligence (DNI) has created a task force, called the Director's Initiatives Group, or DIG, charged with "restoring transparency and accountability to the Intelligence Community." *The Washington Post* reports that the DIG is composed of up to ten people from outside the agency, vetted by the White House, and that its members have been working out of the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) headquarters since late February. The DNI's press release on the stand-up of the DIG states that the DIG is "already identifying wasteful spending in real time, streamlining outdated processes, reviewing documents for declassification, and leading ongoing efforts to root out abuses of power and politicization." In your current capacity as an advisor to Director Gabbard, please answer the following questions:

QUESTION 1: Who are the members of the Director's Initiatives Group? What experience or expertise do they bring to their roles as DIG members? What is their specific mandate? What authorities have they been given? Have they been assigned to particular IC entities?

Answer: The personnel in the Director's Initiatives Group (DIG) are drawn from multiple agencies within the Intelligence Community (IC). All have decades of intelligence and law enforcement experience.

The DIG operates pursuant to various authorities, including the National Security Act and the transparency and accountability missions found in directions in the Executive Orders President Trump entered in records from 20 January 2025. This includes other initiatives and such tasks as are specifically directed by the Director of National Intelligence (DNI).

QUESTION 2: What level of clearances do they hold, to what extent are they read into IC compartments, and what specific IC databases and other systems do they have direct access to?

Answer: All DIG members have a TS/SCI clearance and current polygraph or receive one within 90 days of reporting to the DIG, this is standard across the IC.

In the interest of transparency and accountability, DIG personnel may obtain access to any IC system, database, or document repositories essential for assigned task completion. These are USG systems owned by the Federal Government, and the data is statutorily owned by the ODNI. Fact holders are responsible for sharing such data with the ODNI, and under orders from the DNI to make available to the DIG systems, databases, or records. In instances where the DIG has needed sub-compartmented access, it has worked via the DNI CAPCO office to obtain the accesses subject to long-established security procedures.

QUESTION 3: Which IC entities and which areas of inquiry is the DIG prioritizing?

Answer: The DIG is already hard at work executing President Trump's Executive Orders aimed at rebuilding trust in the IC - starting with investigating weaponization, rooting out deep-seeded politicization, exposing unauthorized disclosures of classified intelligence, and declassifying information that serves a public interest. The DIG is also leading assessments of IC structure, resourcing, and personnel to improve efficiency and eliminate wasteful spending. The DIG will work across all IC entities to ensure transparency and accountability is restored in the IC.

QUESTION 4: Not including claims regarding programs related to diversity, equity and inclusion or climate change, what “wasteful spending” has the DIG identified, and how was such spending determined to be wasteful?

Answer: The DIG is identifying and recommending potential improvements, consolidations, reductions, or elimination that do not impact needed IC capacity. Reviews currently apply only to ODNI. For example, the DIG highlighted excessive empty desks at an ODNI location that would save the IC \$40M per year; duplicative senior staff across Directorates, Centers, and Offices to be measured at \$500k-\$1M per year in savings per office; and duplicative commercial data purchases valued at approximately \$25M.

QUESTION 5: Not including claims regarding processes related to diversity, equity and inclusion or climate change, what “outdated processes” has the DIG identified, and how were such processes determined to be outdated?

Answer: It is not uncommon to see government programs that have outlived their usefulness. Although the DIG has not yet conducted a comprehensive review, to the best of my knowledge, I expect future reviews will uncover candidates for possible elimination. So far, the DIG has identified several outdated processes/practices, including unnecessary delays in the security clearance pipeline for outside entities, top-heavy supervisory staff to employee ratios, and instances where overlapping processes can be consolidated. Currently, I understand the DIG is reviewing projects, department budgets, staffing levels, and organizational structures, with the goal of making recommendations to the DNI and the IC.

QUESTION 6: What specific evidence has the DIG found of “abuses of power and politicization”? How, exactly, is it being “root[ed] out”? Have any IC personnel been fired or otherwise disciplined for “abuses of power and politicization”? If yes, please provide details.

Answer: To the best of my knowledge, the DIG has not yet presented any specific instances of abuses of power or clear politicization. I believe the DIG plans to conduct fair, fact-based reviews of information via processes that are repeatable and transparent. There will be no pre-determined outcomes. Based on my conversation with officers working with the DIG, I understand they believe they have found evidence of political bias injected into various IC assessments, but I have not seen details. I believe no one has been recommended for disciplinary action for abuse of power that inquires and investigations have not been long underway. The DNI has stated the objective is not disciplinary action, but transparency, truth, and accountability. I note the DIG has no power to undertake any personnel actions and can only present facts and make recommendations to the DNI and PDDNI.

QUESTION 7: How is the DIG approaching “reviewing documents for declassification”? What specific topics is the DIG and the Director seeking to have declassified?

Answer: The DIG does not proactively seek to declassify documents but follows actions directed by the DNI and the President that are aimed at promoting national security while still leaning into transparency and public accountability. All declassification projects are subject to DNI/PDDNI oversight, OGC review,

laws, regulations, and Executive Orders. The declassification procedures that exist in the ODNI Information Management Office and throughout the IC remain in effect. Any information selected for potential declassification is subject to the same process that has always existed to ensure the DNI and President are fully informed on potential impacts.

QUESTION 8: During her confirmation process, the DNI indicated that she supported the work of the Public Interest Declassification Board (PIDB). Has the DIG consulted with the PIDB about declassification priorities? If not, does it intend to?

Answer: The DNI directed DIG representatives to meet with the PIDB, which recently occurred. My understanding is this meeting was productive and that the DIG plans continued consultations about what materials should be nominated for declassification.

QUESTION 9: Members of Congress, whose representation of the American people extends to classified work on their behalf, have identified areas for declassification in the public interest. As a current advisor to the DNI, will you help ensure that the DIG engages with the Committee to identify areas for declassification?

Answer: Yes. As I stated in both my written statement and during the SSCI hearing, I believe strongly in the importance of meaningful congressional oversight of intelligence, which is a necessary component of building and maintaining public trust. If confirmed, I would look forward to working with the Committee on areas for declassification.

QUESTION 10: During her confirmation process, the DNI stated that she would “prioritize reforms to modernize classification policies, practices, and technologies to reflect the realities of the digital age.” She then enumerated a long list of reforms necessary to modernize, streamline and otherwise improve the declassification system. Besides record-by-record, or topic-by-topic declassification reviews, is the DIG engaged in these urgent and long-overdue reform efforts?

Answer: While current large declassification projects have been driven by Executive Orders, the DIG will help develop recommendations to modernize the process. This will include adapting lessons the DIG learns during the large

declassification projects – on process, technology, and so on – to improve classification/declassification practices and policies.

QUESTION 11: The Committee was not notified in advance of the DIG's creation or the DNI's press release announcing the DIG's stand-up. Will you ensure, as a current advisor to the DNI, that the Committee is kept fully and currently informed of all aspects of the DIG's work?

Answer: Yes.