

The Director of National Intelligence (DNI)

The Director of National Intelligence (DNI) is responsible for the oversight and direction of the 18 elements of the intelligence community (IC). This includes managing the allocation and expenditure of National Intelligence Program (NIP) funds authorized and appropriated by Congress; promoting collaboration among intelligence agencies, law enforcement, and international partners; and establishing priorities for the collection, analysis, and production of intelligence. Statute provides that the DNI, who is appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate, “shall have extensive national security expertise.” (50 U.S.C. §3023(a)(1))

Creation of the DNI Position

Prior to the creation of the DNI position, the Director of Central Intelligence (DCI) was responsible for managing the diverse elements of the intelligence community, in addition to leading the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), and serving as principal advisor to the President on intelligence matters. Following the attacks on the U.S. homeland of September 11, 2001, the *National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States* (also called the *9/11 Commission*) recommended replacing the triple-hatted position of DCI and establishing an overarching intelligence authority unencumbered by the responsibility of directing the CIA. According to the commission’s recommendation, this new position would enable dedicated management of the IC and would have the authority to allocate and oversee intelligence appropriations, improve the efficiency and integration of programs, and cultivate greater collaboration between agencies, to include improved sharing of information and intelligence among government agencies. Acting on the recommendation, Congress established the DNI position through provisions in the 2004 Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act (P.L. 108-458 or IRTPA) (**Table 1**). With the passage of IRTPA, Congress abolished the position of DCI, giving the DNI responsibility to manage the entire IC and serve as principal intelligence advisor to the President. The Director of the CIA now reports to the DNI.

Table 1. Senate-Confirmed DNIs to Date

2005-2007	Ambassador John Negroponte
2007-2009	VADM (Ret.) J. Michael McConnell
2009-2010	ADM (Ret.) Dennis Blair
2010-2017	LTGEN (Ret.) James Clapper
2017-2019	Former Senator Daniel Coats
2020-2021	Former Representative John L. Ratcliffe
2021-2025	Ms. Avril D. Haines
2025-present	Former Representative Tulsi Gabbard

Principal Responsibilities

Principal Advisor to the President on Intelligence Matters

The DNI advises the President on strategic intelligence programs and activities pertaining to U.S. national security (50 U.S.C. §3023(b)(2)). It may include obtaining presidential approval of covert action programs; briefing the President on intelligence indicating a threat of impending attack; providing strategic assessments of an adversary’s capabilities and intentions, particularly sensitive counterintelligence activities, or intelligence from international partners; and any significant gap in intelligence coverage or an intelligence failure.

Management of the Intelligence Budget

The DNI is directly responsible for oversight and implementation of the NIP (50 U.S.C. §3023(b)(3)). The NIP funds the Office of the DNI (ODNI) and the CIA in their entirety, as well as strategic-level intelligence programs and activities under multiple agencies. The DNI is responsible for participating with the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence and Security (USD[I&S]) in the development of the Military Intelligence Program (MIP) (50 U.S.C. §3024(c)(3)(A)), which funds tactical intelligence and intelligence-related activities of the military. For FY2026, funding *requested* for the NIP and MIP totaled \$115.5 billion, including \$81.9 billion for NIP and \$33.6 billion for MIP.

Selected Authorities

The DNI has the statutory authority to

- direct the “allotment or allocation” of congressionally appropriated funds for the NIP to elements of the IC (50 U.S.C. 3024(c)(5)(A));
- manage and direct the tasking, collection, analysis, production, and dissemination of national intelligence (50 U.S.C. 3024(f)(1)(A)(ii));
- “ensure the elimination of waste and unnecessary duplication within the intelligence community” (50 U.S.C. §3024(f)(5));
- evaluate “the effectiveness of counterintelligence, security, and insider threat program activities” (50 U.S.C. §3024(f)(8)(D));
- establish policies and procedures to ensure “sound analytic methods and tradecraft, independent of political considerations” (50 U.S.C. 3024(h)(1)(A));
- protect intelligence sources and methods from unauthorized disclosure (50 U.S.C. §3024(i)(1));
- “Under the direction of the President ... oversee the coordination of relationships between elements of the

intelligence community and the intelligence or security services of foreign governments or international organizations” (50 U.S.C. §3024(k));

- act as the “exclusive milestone decision authority” for the acquisition of major intelligence systems under the NIP (with the exception of acquisitions involving military programs in which the DNI shares authority with the Secretary of Defense) (50 U.S.C. 3024(q)(1)(B)); and
- establish Functional Managers within ODNI to serve as principal substantive advisors on intelligence collection and analysis related to designated countries, regions, or functional areas such as cyber threat intelligence and international terrorism (50 U.S.C. 3034a(a)).

A comprehensive, statutory list of the DNI’s responsibilities and authorities can be found at 50 U.S.C. §§3023-3034c.

Office of the DNI

To support the DNI, the IRTPA established the ODNI (codified at 50 U.S.C. §3025), a statutory element of the IC staffed by permanent federal employees, contractors, and personnel detailed from other intelligence agencies, under the direction of a Chief Operating Officer. The DNI has periodically reorganized the ODNI consistent with presidential administration policy and priorities. In August 2025, the most recent changes to the ODNI were announced, aimed at streamlining the office and reducing redundancies. They include elimination of three Mission Centers (integrating their core functions with the National Intelligence Council [NIC]), elimination of global health as an ODNI core mission area, closing the National Intelligence University (NIU), and reducing staff by over 40% by the end of FY2025. With these changes, the organizational structure of the ODNI is as follows:

Principal Deputy DNI

The Principal Deputy DNI (PDDNI) is the official, appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate, who is the principal assistant to the DNI in carrying out the Director’s responsibilities. Statute provides that the PDDNI “shall have extensive national security experience and management expertise.” In the event the DNI is absent or disabled, or the position is vacant, the PDDNI “shall act for, and exercise the powers of” the DNI (50 U.S.C. §3026(a)).

Deputy DNIs

The DNI may appoint up to four Deputy DNIs who “shall have such duties, responsibilities, and authorities as the [DNI] may assign or are specified by law” (50 U.S.C. §3026(b)). There are currently two Deputy DNIs: the Deputy DNI for Mission Integration, and the Deputy DNI for Policy and Capabilities, heading the following divisions:

- The Mission Integration Division includes some of the most visible responsibilities of the DNI, such as the National Intelligence Council (NIC); the President’s Daily Brief (PDB); Mission Performance, Analysis, and Collection; the National Intelligence Management Council (NIMC); the Office of Partner Engagement; and the Executives for Space, Counternarcotics, and Open-Source Intelligence.

- The Policy and Capabilities Division includes offices involved with intelligence community management and planning; Data; Acquisition, Procurement and Facilities; Requirements, Cost and Effectiveness; Policy and Strategy; and Science and Technology. The Division also includes the Intelligence Advanced Research Projects Activity (IARPA).

Mission Centers

The DNI has the authority to establish Mission Centers that enable oversight and coordination of intelligence on areas of importance to U.S. national security. With the announcement of the elimination of the National Counterproliferation and Biosecurity Center (NCBC), Foreign Malign Influence Center (FMIC), and Cyber Threat Intelligence Integration Center (CTIIC), there will be two remaining ODNI Mission Centers: the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) and the National Counterintelligence and Security Center (NCSC).

Offices Related to Oversight

Offices in ODNI responsible for various aspects of oversight include the Inspector General of the IC (ICIG); the Office of the General Counsel (OGC); and the offices of Civil Liberties, Privacy and Transparency (CLPT) and Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO).

Other ODNI Components

The ODNI includes the Military Advisor to the DNI; the Chief Financial Officer; Chief Information Officer; the Assistant Directors of Legislative Affairs, and Strategic Communications; and the Economic Security and Emerging Technology Office.

Potential Oversight Issues for Congress

- Congress may consider whether or not the organization and staffing of the ODNI are adequate to fulfill the DNI’s legislative mandate (50 U.S.C. §§3023-3034c).
- Congress may consider whether or not IC oversight mechanisms are able to provide independent oversight of ODNI functionality and resource management.

Relevant Statute
Title 50, U.S. Code, §§3023-3034c
CRS Products
CRS In Focus IF10525, <i>Defense Primer: National and Defense Intelligence</i> , by Michael E. DeVine
Other Resources
Executive Order 12333, <i>United States Intelligence Activities</i> ODNI <i>Intelligence Activities Procedures Approved by the Attorney General Pursuant to E.O. 12333</i>

Michael E. DeVine, Analyst in Intelligence and National Security

Disclaimer

This document was prepared by the Congressional Research Service (CRS). CRS serves as nonpartisan shared staff to congressional committees and Members of Congress. It operates solely at the behest of and under the direction of Congress. Information in a CRS Report should not be relied upon for purposes other than public understanding of information that has been provided by CRS to Members of Congress in connection with CRS's institutional role. CRS Reports, as a work of the United States Government, are not subject to copyright protection in the United States. Any CRS Report may be reproduced and distributed in its entirety without permission from CRS. However, as a CRS Report may include copyrighted images or material from a third party, you may need to obtain the permission of the copyright holder if you wish to copy or otherwise use copyrighted material.