

**House Intelligence Committee Chairman Mike Rogers
Opening Statement for World Wide Threats Hearing
April 11, 2013**

Today, we welcome Director of National Intelligence James Clapper, Director of the CIA, John Brennan, Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, Michael Flynn, and the Director of the FBI Robert Mueller for the yearly open hearing before the House Intelligence Committee. As a reminder to all members, we are in open session, and we should be careful not to discuss classified matters; we will have a closed session immediately following this session to address sensitive matters.

The purpose of this hearing is to allow the American people to hear from those responsible for providing the intelligence to protect the United States; and for America to see first-hand the oversight conducted by their elected representatives.

As always, we live in dangerous times.

A nuclear North Korea continues its bellicose behavior, threatening American allies and interests in the region, as it hopes to distract international attention from its expanding nuclear ambitions. I commend U.S. efforts thus far to show support for our allies and display strong leadership in the region.

In Syria, Bashar al-Assad responded to civil protests with murderous violence, and after two years of chaos, and 70,000 dead, the country is caught in a bloody civil war that plays out under the shadow of chemical weapons. The chaos

places the entire Levant at risk, and without a change in course, it provides a new safe haven for al-Qaeda to plan future attacks, this time while controlling some of the world's most deadly weapons.

Islamic radicals still seek to exploit weak states or regions in their quest to enact an evil vision of society that is opposed to the principles of our civilization.

We experience a daily onslaught of Russian and Chinese cyber attacks – attacks that steal America's technological innovation and ingenuity -- the keys to our future military and economic success as a nation.

And in Afghanistan, where we have spent 12 years fighting those who fought us first, we face the ultimate test of our national will; do we have the conviction to cement our hard-fought gains and achieve a lasting victory, or will we walk away before the job is done.

The challenges are many, and we must face them in an increasingly constrained fiscal environment:

The sequester is an outcome that nobody wanted and I share Director Clapper's concerns about its potential impact and risks to intelligence. I find particularly disturbing reports that the Department of Defense wishes to impose its furlough policy on the Intelligence Community. If these reports are true, this would be mindless and irresponsible.

I support Director Clapper's steps to mitigate the effects of the sequester, such as freezing new hires, delaying contract awards where possible, cutting back lowest priority spending, and avoiding furloughs.

The enactment of the FY 13 defense appropriations bill will be helpful, as the cuts will now be applied to current spending priorities. We've been assured that the IC can meet its core missions, despite the sequester.

Still, the White House and Congress must avoid another sequester. Sequester must not become the "new normal".

I speak now before the people responsible for managing our intelligence community and giving policy makers the information needed to do our jobs. But these intelligence professionals can only do their jobs when policy-makers do ours first.

We must set clear policy goals and objectives to keep this country safe.

When the threats are numerous and the constraints are many, we have the duty to explain a coherent national security strategy to protect the United States.

From both sides of the aisle, we see a rising tide of isolationism. Whether we are discussing provoked fears about the use of drones, or how to help the Syrian crisis, we hear that people are weary of war. We hear that people are fearful of more U.S. interventions in the world. People are skeptical of the efficacy and morality of American power.

America has faced such worries before. And we must lead America out of this challenging time, and inspire renewed confidence that a thoughtfully engaged America can continue to be a force for good in the world.

We must speak clearly to both our friends and our enemies, so no one doubts where we stand.

We must mean what we say. When America announces a policy against a foreign regime, America must act to effectuate the outcome, not stand by hoping the outcome arises organically.

We must not simply watch events unfold. To hope events turn out in a peaceful and positive way is to ignore history and to avoid responsibility for the costs of inaction.

After a decade of the war against Islamic extremism, Americans may understandably worry about the costs of action. But ignoring threats will not avoid those costs. The bill for inaction will always come due.

I have never known Americans to back down from a righteous challenge.

So I call on America's leaders and I call on America: don't abandon the world; let's not turn our backs on those looking for American leadership; let's continue to stand as the rock of freedom and prosperity in the world.

I now turn to the Ranking Member for any remarks he would like to make.