



Program Transcript

INSA Leadership Dinner with CIA Director Michael Pompeo

Ritz-Carlton Tysons Corner, McLean, VA

Tuesday, July 11, 2017

This transcript has been edited slightly for brevity and clarity.

Participants

- **Michael Pompeo**, Director, Central Intelligence Agency

Director Pompeo: Thank you. Thanks for those very, very kind words. And Tish, thank you too, for inviting me to be here with you all this evening. I'm very much looking forward to it. I have a set of remarks. Some things I do want to share with you but I look forward to taking questions as well. At least I think I do; I'll let you know for sure at the end of this evening.

I would be remiss too – thank you all for being part of this organization. I spent the bulk of my adult life running a company that made aerospace components, hard metal goods. I was never successful at selling the CIA anything but I sure as heck tried. You all form an important part of what we do at CIA every day and I want to thank you for that.

Not too long ago, a very brave warrior came to us after having served 24 years in the United States Army. He served with an office in the CIA's Directorate of Operations that tackled some of the most sensitive and difficult tasks that our agency undertakes.

It was a group for which he was eminently well qualified. He brought with him a sterling military record. He had had a great career; he had been a Ranger. He was among the best and he stood out for sure. He had character, intellect, grit, and courage. He excelled at battlefield techniques, physical fitness, and marksmanship. But perhaps most importantly he had an uncanny knack for getting the job done, however difficult the task, and the CIA was thrilled to have him join our team.

His first overseas [duty], like many of our officers, was in Afghanistan working on counterterrorism. After only a few weeks, missions with him followed a predictable routine, the planning meticulous; the execution precise; the mood, cool and composed. The objective would be achieved.

He was asleep one morning, having just finished a mission the night before, when an explosion shook the walls of his room, jolting him awake. He quickly gathered his equipment and met up with his colleagues. Several hundred yards away a car bomb had exploded; it was at the entrance of the compound that housed Afghan soldiers. He threw on his gear, climbed in his armored truck, and headed to the fight.

Just as he arrived, a second car bomb detonated, and enemy fire came streaming in from every direction. Instead of seeking cover, this CIA officer leapt from his truck and ran through the dust and smoke towards the action. His colleagues said he had no fear.

Near the gate, he saw two Afghan soldiers lying on the ground. They were wounded and in the open. He rushed over and carried them away himself. He was hit during that—once in the shoulder, once in the leg. But despite his wounds, he continued to fight. He moved forward engaging the enemy, taking position behind a small set of concrete stairs. From there, he furiously fought to check the enemy advance until his colleagues could join him. He was a one-man wrecking crew.

The attackers raked the pavement and shredded tree limbs with gunfire. There were hand grenades and RPGs; machine guns and suicide vests. He fought valiantly to subdue them until a grenade landed next to him. There was nothing he could do to deflect it. It exploded, inflicting a mortal wound.

While he was being carried away our CIA officer had a friend call out to him. As if reporting for duty one last time, he shouted, "I'm here!" Even at the end, this CIA gallant patriot stood ready to serve, just as he always had—wherever and whenever our country needed him.

It's the best of what our Agency has to offer. The Agency today in 2017 faces serious threats to our civilization and we're bound, and duty bound, rather, to fight them: terrorism, weapons proliferation, and cyber warfare—they're all quite tangible.

Our mission demands that we have determined and aggressive espionage. We must steal secrets with audacity and be unafraid to make sure we have unfair advantage against our enemy at every turn.

I'm blessed to be the CIA Director and have thousands of officers working towards that same objective. And I am incredibly proud to lead them. We'll be relentless to defend against the threats to our nation, because they're real. A quick rundown of the things we're facing today, although not necessarily in order.

First, the scourge of terrorism. The Agency has been at the center of the fight since September 11. Even today, as Mosul has fallen and Raqqa comes under increasing pressure, the dire threat remains. We still have work to do to defeat ISIS. The same thing we did to core al-Qa'ida is the mission for them. I hope they're listening tonight, because the CIA will be a part of accomplishing that great and noble end.

We still have a lot of work to do, especially given ISIS's willingness to forego major, al-Qa'ida-style attacks in favor of widespread, smaller assaults that they can pull off easily and with relatively little planning. We should be proud but never complacent. Like France and Britain, America has plenty of trucks and plenty of sidewalks.

Next, and much in the news, is North Korea. Pyongyang is pushing 24 hours a day to continue their development of ICBMs that can reach us here in the States, and attach a nuclear warhead. As we witnessed last week, North Korea conducted its longest-ever launch of a missile, an ICBM. This underscores the grave threat, and while the President has made clear that this is something that must be defeated, diplomatic and kinetic responses are both difficult to achieve. The CIA stands ready to help the President achieve his ends. For 20 years, America whistled past the graveyard of the problem in North Korea. We do not intend for it to go on that much longer. For 20 years – for 20 years – we allowed [North Korea] to develop its weapons systems. It's time for that to cease.

In Iran, we face an adversary on the march. Unlike ISIS and its mirage of a caliphate, the Islamic Republic of Iran is a powerful nation-state that remains the world's largest state sponsor of terrorism. Its strength and influence continue to increase, most notably in recent years. When you look at what's happening in Syria, Yemen, and Iraq, you can see the threat. Tehran clearly aspires to be the hegemonic power in the region. And though we're currently focused on destroying ISIS, Iran presents our biggest Mideast challenge over the long term. And the CIA will perform a central role in pushing back against this threat.

Finally, we confront an array of insidious adversaries—states and non-state actors—that seek to erode democracy and the rule of law around the world. This includes groups like WikiLeaks, a non-state hostile intelligence service that recruits spies, rewards people who steal legitimate secrets, and uses that information to subvert Western democracies. And it certainly includes the Russian government, which has long been the world's foremost practitioner of active measures. It's been going on for decades.

The cyber domain has greatly facilitated and accelerated these activities. Instead of having to rely on moles or agents, our adversaries can just sit in a room and send ones and zeroes across to do us harm. And it's much easier for authoritarian governments to use these tools than it is for democracies. There's much work to do.

The bottom line is that it's hard to sit in the Director's chair and not see a world that is a dangerous place. The threat to the civilized world is for real. You know I come from Kansas, the heartland, and this sense that there's evil in the world, that it must be defeated, is not hyperbole or hyperventilation. It's a rational response to these threats. So, returning to my question from a moment ago, what does all this mean for CIA and how do we accomplish these missions for America and for the President?

First, it means we have to do everything in our power to provide the strategic understanding our policymakers. Tish talked about foreign intelligence collection; it's the core of what we do. It puts tremendous pressure on us. It means we have to be relentless in stealing secrets from our adversaries and we have to be world-class when it comes to bringing together intelligence from across the government – not just the CIA, but the NSA, the NGA, the FBI – everyone who has a touchpoint that helps provide information that can keep our country safe. And when we deliver our assessments we must do so with complete candor. CIA has to speak the truth to whomever we serve without fear or favor. Whenever I swear in new officers, I tell them they have a duty to deliver the truth in everything that they do.

I spend a little bit of time with the President almost every day, sharing the amazing work the Intelligence Community has been able to deliver into a single space and a single point in time to help inform his decision making. I'm proud that I get to be that vessel to communicate that important information to our President.

We also today need officers of majestic intellect across a wide range of disciplines. It's tough stuff to do intelligence work. It requires the capacity to absorb vast amounts of information and it requires the perceptiveness to spot trends lurking beneath the data, and creativity. And, frankly, we need help from private sector partners as well and I hope during my time we can continue to take advantage of the great work that's being done in the private sector to provide aid to our Agency so that we can deliver a world-class product to the United States Government.

Third, if we are to succeed against today's threats, we need a nation that understands what our Agency does and what it doesn't do. I've read all the novels; I sat on the oversight committee for a few years and had a chance to see the Agency a bit. But it's not possible to understand the scope and breadth and the capacity of the Central Intelligence Agency without being part of it. I view it as one of the most fundamental, important things I can undertake during my time is to make sure the American people know the work we are doing is noble and important and lawful and central to keeping America safe. We have to make sure they know that we are a *foreign* intelligence agency. That's our aim: to catch bad guys that threaten us all around the world.

We all – and I would ask your help in this – we all have to counter the narrative that the CIA is a rogue agency, somehow untethered from government. I can tell you CIA is subject to rigorous oversight and appropriately so, both from the executive branch and – from within the executive branch, within the legislative branch, and from the courts. We have to push back against stories that are in the media that are misleading, that talk about things our officers didn't do. And we need to talk about making sure the media understands they're not permitted to talk about the things our officers actually do. It's difficult to do in the intelligence business. We operate in secret, for good reason, so we're often limited in what we can say. We have to protect important, national security, classified information. Sometimes we can't set the record straight when doing so could harm national security. But I think it's fundamentally important we retain the trust of the American people so they will continue to give us the authority and the resources to perform the critical mission we do each day.

We also of course need a Commander-in-Chief who appreciates the work we do and a US Government that understands it as well. We have to work closely with our partners at Defense and at State and our partners in Homeland Security and the FBI to make sure that we have a deep understanding of what's really taking place around the world.

I've now spent six months, nearly, working for President Trump. He's a demanding customer and, frankly, we like it that way, because it shows he depends on us and values what we do. Let me give you a brief example to illustrate that point. Back in April one afternoon I got a call from the President. He wanted to talk about some disturbing images that he saw coming in from Syria. I'm sure you saw many of them yourselves—scenes of innocent civilians writhing in agony, the apparent victims of a chemical weapons attack.

The President had a very direct message for me: He wanted to know exactly what had happened, and he wanted to know quickly. So we assembled a crack team, a couple hundred folks at the Agency, to begin to diagnose and understand what had taken place. They began piecing together the evidence, working closely with outstanding partners all across the Intelligence Community. The next day the President called his cabinet together. As we sat down, he turned to me and asked what we had learned. Several of us shared what we now knew. I told him that the Intelligence Community had concluded that a chemical weapon had indeed been used in the attack, and that it had been launched by the Syrian regime.

The President paused a moment and said, "Pompeo, are you sure?" I will admit to you that took my breath away. I hope it did for some of you as well. But I knew the Intelligence Community had solid evidence, evidence we could provide to the President that he could count on. I was able to look him in the eye and say, Mr. President, we have high confidence that that's what truly took place.

He never looked back. Based on the Intelligence Community's judgment, he made one of the most consequential decisions of his young administration, launching a strike against the very airfield from which the attack originated.

Finally, for us to be successful in confronting today's daunting array of security threats, there is one thing above all else that the CIA constantly has to do and that's improve, and that's adapt to the changing times and the changing threats. I'm proud to say the Agency is operating full throttle with respect to that today. I have taken over an agency with great capability that only needed the bridle removed so it could accelerate to full speed. We have responsibility for global coverage but we're clearly going to set priorities. I've created two new mission centers aimed at focusing on putting a dagger in the heart of the Korean problem and the problem in Iran. This sets the priorities; it makes clear that we understand that the President asked us [for] specific pieces of information that he needs critically to perform the tasks that he views as most vital to our nation's security.

It reminds me much of when I ran a small business. There were many tasks that we had to perform at a very high level of excellence. But we also had immediate tasks, things that if we failed, the company might not continue to exist. Government's a little bit different. The immediate feedback loop is not always there. But the same dynamic, agile organization that I tried to run as a business owner sits before me today. I'm so proud to be leading it. I'm demanding excellence from everyone at all times and I'm finding that everyone there wants to achieve it.

We know we won't always succeed. There will be bad days. But we have to accept some risk in our Agency in order to be successful. If you're not coming short at times you're probably not reaching hard enough, and we are certainly going to do that—reach hard, every day.

Since taking office some 24 weeks ago, I have seen firsthand why CIA officers are considered a national treasure. They accomplish truly awesome things every day, and they do so with courage, determination, and humility. You know, when I thank them, they often shun the recognition. They say they're just doing their jobs. They say that they signed up to do this mission, and indeed they did. Their dedication is to a cause larger than themselves and that certainly makes the CIA very special, and it's why I'm so confident about our future.

I have no doubt whatsoever that our country will turn to the CIA many times, and we will prevail against today's adversaries and those yet to come. Thank you for having me here today. I look forward to your questions.

[Applause]

Conversation with Charlie Allen

Participants

- **Michael Pompeo**, Director, Central Intelligence Agency
- **Charlie Allen**, Senior Intelligence Advisor, INSA; Principal, The Chertoff Group

Charlie Allen: Thank you. Thank you for those remarks, Director [inaudible]. It's really well received. Because we are a really selfless, very dedicated group of people and it's inspiring to hear how well you've taken over in the first six months that you've been Director. You talked a little bit about the scope and the threats that runs all the way from North Korea to Russia to China, proliferation to international organized crime, which is a whole new world that's getting more and more vicious. How do you view all this? How do you feel the agency is changing to meet the speed and the velocity of the threats that we're facing? It's really a very different world from the more static Cold War that I worked so hard many years ago.

Pompeo: Charlie, I really appreciate the question. I was a Cold Warrior once too, now, several decades back. I still try to use the phrase Russia and avoid Soviet Union when I talk about it.

Look, it's an enormous challenge, it's one with which I'm familiar from my time in business: you have to be fast, your competitors, in our case our adversaries, are really quick. I was asked one time how I thought the enemy would respond to a particular action that America was contemplating and I said "Well, they won't have a meeting like this one." They'll move quickly, and we have to move quickly as well, and that means we have to understand the adversary in a way that truly reflects what they're doing.

Not to overreact, but also to make sure we're not worshipping our org chart inside the Agency: that we understand the mission and we are able to move against our enemies quickly. It means several things: one, you have to understand the priority set, you have to understand how it can change, and then third you have to make sure, and this is a little counterintuitive, you have to make sure that you continue to build the reservoir of talent and resources. That is, you have to have the right people and you have to have the right technologies, and so, I try to spend a little bit of time each day, making sure that we're taking care of things that'll happen long after I'm the Director of the CIA.

Putting in place the tools for five, and 10, and 15 years from now, knowing that this world is going to change really fast and if we try to build it in two months when it's a ten year project we'll be too late. And so, there's an agileness and excitement of the moment but we also have to think very clearly about making sure we meet the demands of the future as well.

Allen: Thank you. On the sixth of January, this year the CIA, the FBI and the National Security Agency, Admiral Rogers is here, published an Intelligence Community Assessment that said that the Russian Federation, through cyber and through other covert means tried to influence the results of the U.S. election. Do you have any comments on that particular assessment, and how do you feel about sanctions against the Russians? What's the outlook you see as we go downstream here with the president?

Pompeo: I'll leave the policy issues like sanctions to others it's not my task, but the threat of our adversaries trying to muck with our elections is very real. The Russians clearly did it in the 2016 election, they did it in the 2012 election, and the 1970's as well! There were those that seem aghast and shocked that the Russians were trying to impact and adversely place an outcome that they preferred on American democracy. They've been at this a hell of a long time.

And so, we have a task to make sure we defend against it; not just from the Russians but from - we've seen the Chinese, lots of hacking during my time on the Oversight Committee, trying to get to places in which they have no business and systems here in the United States. We've seen the Iranians do it. The list of those that are seeking the demise of Western democracy is long, many of them will use the tools that are the typical ones that get talked about, but some of them will use things like active measures and cybersecurity. We, and that certainly includes and I did see Admiral Rogers earlier this evening, it includes all of the IC being prepared not only to do this well defensively but to think about how to respond to those attacks as well.

Allen: Thank you. Director, Mosul has fallen, we know that Raqqa is being surrounded and will fall. You spoke very strongly about the battle against ISIS and the fact that it is slowly being, as Secretary Mattis said, being annihilated in cities in Iraq and Syria. What about the diaspora? Are we prepared to work with our European allies, and others too because inevitably ISIS will come after us through terrorism and through other schema to damage the West and to damage the United States.

Pompeo: So, three tasks: I mean, the short answer is yes. Not only are we prepared to work with our European allies, we've been doing it. I spoke with one of my European counterparts just today, I've worked closely with them in the first six months, the team's been doing it much longer than I've been the Director. We'll work closely with them, to try and help them secure their countries against homeland threats as well.

Well look, Mission One, you talked about the diaspora, Mission One is to make sure there's as few people in diaspora as possible. Right? So first mission: kill as many as you can. Because it is the case that they'll continue the fight.

Second, we need to make sure that as an intelligence community, we do our work; we baseline adequately so that we can track them wherever they may go. There are ISIS affiliates today in half a dozen plus countries. Some of them are loosely affiliated with ISIS, some of them deeply connected and we need to make sure and do the work to take down those networks wherever we find them as well.

And then finally this is a task that falls less to the CIA and more to others we have to make sure that we're doing the right thing, to make sure we secure America against ISIS here as well. If we do those three things, and we do them with élan and aggressively, we'll push back... we'll win.

Allen: Yes, good. The intelligence community is supposed to tell the president about threats and to avoid surprise. As an old officer of CIA, we failed in some cases there. History is a little checkered on our ability to forecast, to give advance warning, to be able to understand the threats before we're in extreme crisis. I've been in extreme crisis, at CIA where we failed to give advance warning. How about this world you talked about earlier? The digital world, where we have machine learning, we have big data analytics, how do you feel that the agency is along with the community is positioned to do a better job at getting ahead of the threat?

Pompeo: Yeah, it's tough and I'm confident that when we look back 25 years from now that history will still be checkered. I'm sure we'll miss a few. But boy, I've seen an awful lot of good work done, some of it tactical, stopping tactical threats from ISIS, taking down terror plots. But I've also seen some really good work that's been done taking down operational and strategic threats as well. Identifying them, preparing all of U.S. government to think about how to be prepared when the threat actually arises on the, actually crosses over the horizon, is right on top of us.

Look, it means we've got to be hard, it means we have to continue to devote the right resources - that America's going to have to continue to devote the resources that are so precious, but if we do it well, we can get it right most all of the time.

Allen: That's great. Early in the administration, we saw a good deal of press about morale at the Agency and the administration was not being kind to the intelligence community. I take my own sort of private poll in sort of talking to officers at the Agency, I feel the morale is very high, frankly, at Langley, Virginia. And could you give us a little more color, or understanding about the president and his top advisors and how they take the briefings each day as you go downtown?

Pompeo: Sure. But first, I mean I tell you, I've traveled [to] several dozen stations in six months, maybe it's just a couple dozen, it's a bunch, one of the highlights of every trip is to go meet with officers that are working around the world to defeat the bad guys, and these are young, talented, aggressive people who are just dying to get out there and crush it on behalf of America. I have to tell you, morale is spectacularly high, and I'm thrilled to see that.

With respect to the president, I talked about the fact that I'm with him almost every day in the Oval Office, delivering him both things that are really current, that is, trying to prepare him for the things right in front of him, but also working hard to ensure that we're building a baseline of knowledge, in the same way that I'm working to build my baseline of knowledge. It's hard work, the president is a tough customer, he asks hard questions, and we hope that if we don't have the answer that day we can get right back to him and make sure we deliver it to him.

I've read the stories too, I've seen it all, I can only tell you what my experience is with the president and frankly, the experience of the officers, my officers who have been with the president as well, is that he not only values and appreciates the people, but is counting on us to deliver for him, and I'm counting on my team to deliver for him as well.

Allen: That's great. One thing that bothers me as an intelligence officer is what may seem to be occurring across government, including Capitol Hill, is sort of a culture of leakage. You went after WikiLeaks a few minutes ago and you did it at CSIS, is there anything more we can and must do because I think, really, we're putting the country at risk, putting sources and methods, some of which we helped create decades ago. Do you have any further comments on this culture of leakage that - it seems to me - has got to stop at some point?

Pompeo: So Charlie, there's always more you can do. One of the first things I did is one of the heads of counter intelligence now reports directly to me. That's different, it was intended not only to make sure that I was personally a part of making sure that we were doing CI well but I wanted to make sure everyone in my organization understood that it was an enormous priority for me. We've got to get that right. And I think we can, there are things we can do inside our own building, there are things we can do in our screening process that will decrease the likelihood that we have a threat from inside.

And then too, there are things we can do to make sure that others aren't stealing our secrets, those from outside, and we have an obligation to do that and get that right. I will tell you that it is enormously frustrating to read things in the press that you know ought not to be there and I hope it's the case that this government will ensure that every man's evidence is available to prosecute

those that have violated the most fundamental principle of securing that information and keeping our officers, their families, our assets, and our nation safe.

Allen: You've worked - you're West Point, Armor, then private sector, and then of course, the Congress. You saw a lot of the private sector. As an old intelligence officer, we're not as agile in dealing with and understanding the private sector and the motivations—what drives the private sector, the practices, what are the things that the intelligence community should learn or has learned in order to be more nimble and agile, and particularly in this digital age?

Pompeo: Yeah. So I think it's quite a bit but there's a lot of room to go. One of the things that the Agency doesn't benefit from that the private sector does, is, look in the private sector, if you perform poorly, it doesn't take long to figure it out. Customers vanish, profits go away and the Board of Directors wants to know what the heck's going on. It's different here. The feedback loop isn't quite as crystal clear, it means you have to be ever more vigilant.

My efforts have been to sort of take the same basic precepts of leadership that I had when I ran the two businesses that I ran which is: first, make sure everybody understands the commander's intent. Make sure they understand what the president or I am looking for, and be very clear about it—unabashed about making sure they know their mission and the expectations, and then hold them accountable for that. And then, knock down barriers so they can go do their work.

We have, we bring in some of the most talented people every year from all across the country. Just this week I swore in 70 more officers, great young people from every background you can imagine in America, and I think my duty to them is to make sure I tell them what it is we expect from them I set them down the path, I knock everything out of their way so they can go do it, and then reward them when they succeed. If we can do those things, those same things you would do in the business environment we'll be good enough.

Allen: That's great. How important do you see traditional human-source intelligence, you know, it's a world, it's changed so rapidly, with cyber as means of acquiring information... at the same time, you know, human intelligence, it strikes me, and traditional espionage is very crucial to the success and security of the country. What are your views having looked at the Agency, traveled abroad, talked to stations, and people in the warzones?

Pompeo: Yeah, we've got to do human intelligence incredibly well. It requires young, daring men and women ready to go to difficult places and attack adversaries at their very heart. What's a blessing is that we have a whole host of them working for us today, and we have to do it well. It's more difficult today, right, with all the digital footprints that everybody leaves behind it's more difficult to get an anonymous officer in undercover to the right place at the right moment. It's definitely trickier, but it's just as important.

It's also the case, and we work closely with our signals brothers, is that it is almost always the case that we're working closely together. That is, whether you call it human-enabled SigInt or signals-enabled HumInt, we are out there beside each other making sure that we're delivering the right information. It takes human beings with the capacity to get to the most critical places at the right time, and we have to make sure we're the world's best at it.

Allen: How do you view the Five Eyes arrangements? I worked very closely, for many years, with an information sharing and directing operations with our close allies, and of course we have other relationships around the world. How do you look on foreign relationships, and the health of those relationships, from CIA and the rest of the community to our colleagues overseas?

Pompeo: I've often been asked what's most surprising about my new role. One of the things I always mention is how much time I spend talking to our partners around the world, those who are helping us do our mission. We couldn't do it without them. Our Five Eyes partners occupy a special place, and have a special relationship and that's central to what we do.

But make no mistake about it, the United States government depends deeply on having great partners who are willing to share information with us, willing to run operations with us, willing to help us achieve our priorities, and that means America has got to do the same thing for them. I have been happily surprised at how many great partners we have that are willing to help America do the most difficult intelligence tasks around the world. We're in real good shape.

Allen: Commercial technology is moving at a very fast pace, and consumer technologies are moving even faster. How can CIA keep pace with this adoption of new and advanced commercial technology?

Pompeo: We have to embrace it, we have to welcome it, we have to encourage it, we have to be willing to pay for it. That is, we have to put the agency in a place where private enterprise understands that there are real needs in the intelligence community and help us to deliver against it. I think we can do it, and I think we do it pretty well, but there is enormous room for improvement there. We have to be out trying to identify, in the way that the Agency has done well, but being able to identify best in class technology, make sure that we are not wedded to doing something only because we invented it inside of the building, but rather be prepared to adopt world-class technology when it helps us achieve our ends. If we do that really well, we will be really fast, some of you will be a little bit richer, and America will be more secure.

Allen: As an old intelligence officer, CIA is sort of resistant to structural change. I remember we had a deputy director of plans, Jim Schlesinger when he was briefly director, he changed it to Director of Operations, it seemed like a terrible thing to do. I remember old case officers saying "why would we ever give away the name DDP (Deputy Director of Plans)?" Well, you met your predecessor, a modernization program, which made significant change. What are your views on further modernization for CIA. You just talked about two new centers you had and putting a dagger in the heart. I thought that was wonderful metaphor, so what are your views on change?

Pompeo: So I have not banned, but I have suggested the banning of the word "modernization" at the CIA because it suggests an end point, and there isn't. If we're going to do this well, just like when I ran a business, if a product line wasn't selling, we did something different tomorrow, and we didn't penalize the folks that were building that product line, it was nothing against them, we just moved onto things customers really wanted. And in the same way, the agency has to be ever changing as well. When you talk about modernization, it's as if you're going to go through some transformation.

I have urged people, those of you that are sitting with one of our officers at a table tonight, ask them if they have our org chart printed on the wall, and if they do, let me know, because I've asked folks not to print the darn thing, and I've said that repeatedly. It's because we have to be faster than an inkjet. We have to be able to be nimble enough to get after our adversaries. Yes, we need to have organization. Anarchy does not succeed. But we shouldn't worship at the altar of this thing called modernization.

We should just make sure that we understand mission, and that we're taking the monetary resources, the technological resources, the human resources, applying them against that problem set with enormous vigor, and if we do that, we'll be fine. So that means, any time you have a particular structure, I hope we're tearing down a piece of that every single day and building a new piece.

Allen: That's great. You spoke about the need for talent. Are we getting the diversity? Are we getting people with the kind of background, a culture and language knowledge that we need?

Pompeo: The short answer is yes, but we have to be ever vigilant. I think about make that even better, whether it's language skills, or cultural understanding, or hard math skills. Whatever the talent set may be that we need, we have to make sure that we have it right at the front end, so

that 10 years from now, or 20 years from now, that next set of leaders, someone who will run our talent center 20 years from now, we don't have an opening, we have 30-40 people highly qualified for that. That's really the mission set. It's tricky to do.

Lots of you out there are running private enterprise and you're willing to pay people a lot for those same talent sets. But the great blessing of living in America, is that we often have people, who are willing to sacrifice some of that because they're great patriots, and want to undertake what is frankly the most interesting set of tasks that anyone can undertake: being a CIA officer. We have remarkable people who have sacrificed a great deal to do that. So those of you watching and those of you sitting in the audience, come join us. We need great men and women who are willing to do great things.

Charlie Allen: Director, if you had to name three things you've learned while being the Director of CIA that you did not really appreciate when you were a member of the HPSCI, the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, what would be those major points? Now you're inside Langley and inside this global intelligence agency that has such huge tasks. What do you think are the most important takeaways?

Pompeo: Most of what I've learned, I can't share with you.

I talked about the importance of our foreign liaison partners and the great work that they do.

I have also, for the first time, watched how the United States stands up a new government, and how difficult that task is and how critical it is that we work every day to be better, not only inside our building and inside the intelligence community, but to make sure we are addressing the need of this government as it has stood itself up, to be prepared. It is an enormous undertaking. We still have too many positions in our government not filled, and we need to make sure that we have them so that all of the national security team can be in place.

The last thing I'd say is that the officers that work in the CIA do this in a way that is different. I was an active duty soldier for a few years. When soldiers deploy, families come around them. Communities work together. It's just different when you're working at this place. We have to make sure we do our best. We have to make sure we take care of our officers and their families. We have to make sure we never forget how much of a sacrifice those families are making on behalf of America's well-being, and we have to make sure that we continue to do that at a level of excellence that honors their commitment to America.

Allen: You spoke of the cyber threat from China. Do you have any generalized comments you can make, without getting into classified realms?

Pompeo: With respect to?

Allen: China.

Pompeo: Yes...

Allen: It's a big country.

Pompeo: It's a big country with lots of challenges. The Chinese present significant threats to the United States, you articulated a handful of them. Their expansionism throughout the South China Sea and East China Sea is real and continuing. Their willingness to expend an awful lot of money to continue to build up their forces globally so that they can ultimately have greater economic power as against the United States is constant. We have to make sure we're doing that. They have an enormous cyber capability, and I will tell you first and foremost, I truly hope that we can convince them that it is in their best interest that Kim Jung Un no longer has nuclear weapons as

well. They have the capacity to make a big difference there and it is this president's expectation they will deliver against that capacity.

Allen: That's great. The issue of the Muslim ban - and it's not a Muslim ban if you've read the executive order. Is that hurting us in any way in recruitment or bringing in talent?

Pompeo: No.

Allen: That's good answer. One of the things that does bother me now that I'm working in the private sector is that I didn't realize how poorly government and the intelligence community included in doing contracts, getting from a proposal, to an RFP, to a whole issue of getting a contract, and this audience knows that too well. Great question for the evening.

Pompeo: I don't know what to say. I ran a business that had some of those contracts. I actually remember the very first time we did a contract with an entity. We were a tier 2 supplier, but we nonetheless had the government contract responsibility at the second level, and I remember trying to line edit it, only to be told by my customer, yeah, that's just binary, either sign it or don't.

We have to make sure that we are delivering a contract that makes sense, that protects the taxpayer's interest, that serves the CIA's goal, but honestly, I've seen the bureaucracy create nightmares too, that is more paperwork for no benefit. I haven't spent much time staring at that yet, but I am hopeful that we can do that in a way that is world class, that is as good as the Fortune 100 companies do today. If we can match that, that will serve America very well also.

Allen: I think we have time for one more question. In 2011, the primary threats were the same: Russia, China, North Korea. And we had the Arab Spring. It's the need to get ahead of the threat to anticipate, to see societal changes, and you're doing a lot of work in the Directorate of Digital Innovation. You're looking at using big data platforms in ways to detect this early on, and patterns in what Rumsfeld used to call the "unknown unknowns". Any further comment on that, sir?

Pompeo: No, other than there are lots of really smart people and really good technologies that I think can help us supplement the human intellect in way that can let us be a little more predictive. We can also make sure that we're not drinking our own bath water. That is, we are constantly challenging our assumptions, the platforms upon which we build our analytic product. If we do that, and do it in real time, we'll serve the country well, and if we don't we'll fail all too often to keep America safe.

Allen: Director Pompeo, thank you for this evening. You have a lot of friends out here in the private sector. Thank you for coming.

Pompeo: Thank you very much. God bless you.