



Written by [Rebecca Terrell](#) on September 17, 2009

Hefty Price Tag for U.S. Spy Activities

Director of National Intelligence Dennis Blair has announced that U.S. spy activities cost taxpayers \$75 billion a year. It was an unprecedented move, as U.S. officials have always taken great pains to keep military-intelligence spending secret.

The disclosure is included in a 24-page version of the *National Intelligence Strategy* (NIS) released Tuesday. Blair explained to the Federal News Service that same day his reason for releasing the unclassified document: "The American people deserve to know about their intelligence enterprise and ... what we're doing to protect the country."



The \$75 billion budget covers both the National Intelligence Program (NIP) made up of 16 agencies, including the CIA, and the Military Intelligence Program. It amounts to more than 10 percent of the annual U.S. defense budget of about \$650 billion. The Bush administration previously reported non-military intelligence cost \$47.5 billion in fiscal 2008 but released no military figures at that time. Blair disclosed a \$45 billion budget at a media roundtable in March. Details of the \$75 billion figure are not included in the NIS but are classified in annexes available to members of Congress.

Blair, a retired admiral, describes the NIS as a four-year strategic "blueprint" for coordinating the country's spy organizations to combat security threats. "This old distinction between military and non-military intelligence is no longer relevant," he said. "The problems we face in the world have strong military, diplomatic, economic and other aspects that all work together and need to be supported by an interlocked and interweaving set of intelligence activities."

The report warns that Iran, Korea, China, and Russia pose particular threats to national security, as do criminal organizations and violent political extremists on both international and domestic fronts. Cybersecurity also ranks as a top priority. According to Blair, U.S. intelligence officials are now well equipped to combat these threats, as efficiencies and coordination among the various agencies have greatly improved since Congress created the NIP with passage of the 2004 Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act. In a speech to the Commonwealth Club in San Francisco on Tuesday, he claimed, "If we had this system of working back on 9/11, I don't think the attacks would have occurred."



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