

IN HIS LAST WORDS BEFORE SENATE ARMED SERVICES, CLAPPER WARNS AGAINST CONGRESSIONAL “MICROMANAGEMENT”



This morning, the Senate Armed Services Committee held a hearing today on foreign cyberthreats, which mostly (though not entirely) focused on the Russian hack of the DNC.

At the very end of the hearing, John McCain decided to let James Clapper – who will retire in 15 days (as he reminded several times during the hearing) – offer a few reflections on his service.

In response, Clapper acknowledged the important role Congress plays in overseeing the secret activities of the intelligence community. But he ended the statement by warning of the difference between “oversight” and “micromanagement.”

I was around in the intelligence community were first established and have watched them and experienced them ever since. Congress does have, clearly, a extremely important role to play when it comes to oversight of intelligence activities and unlike many other endeavors of the government, much of what we do – virtually all of what we do – is done in secrecy. So the Congress has a very important – a crucial

responsibility – on behalf of the American people for overseeing what we do particularly in terms of legality and protection of civil liberties and privacy.

At risk of delving into a sensitive area though, I do think there is a difference between oversight and micromanagement.

This may well reflect his views. But at a time when Trump is threatening to rearrange the IC to retaliate against its reporting on the Russian DNC hack (not to mention for Clapper's own firing of Trump National Security Advisor Michael Flynn), Clapper might have have been well-advised to avoid suggestion that Congress should not exercise its oversight role over Congress very vigorously.