

JAMES CLAPPER CONTINUES TO EXPRESS WILLINGNESS TO ALLOW GAO TO REVIEW INTELLIGENCE

I have been pretty critical of Obama's appointment of James Clapper to be Director of National Intelligence. And while I still have my concerns about Clapper's close ties to the Intelligence Industrial Complex, I am heartened by Steven Aftergood's report that Clapper continues to express a willingness to allow GAO to review intelligence functions.

DNI James R. Clapper expressed a considerably narrower view of what should be off-limits to GAO [than then National Security Advisor James Jones did in a letter sent in May] in public remarks (pdf) earlier this month: "I am more concerned or sensitive about GAO getting into what I would consider sort of the core essence of intelligence – that is, evaluating sources and methods, critiquing national intelligence estimates, doing this sort of thing, which I think strikes at the very essence of what the intelligence committees were established to do." Even so, he suggested that individual GAO staff members could also pursue such highly sensitive matters if this was formally done under direction of the intelligence committees:

"Now, [if] they want to have the GAO assist, detail GAO staff to – if they have the subject matter experts – to the committees. I think that's fine as long as it's done under the auspices of the committees when you're getting at the core essence of what intelligence is and

does," Gen. Clapper said.

We'll see when DNI submits its guidance on GAO oversight to Congress next May. But I applaud, at least thus far, Clapper's sustained willingness to allow Congress to rely on GAO's skills as it tries to conduct oversight of the intelligence community.

Update: Typo in headline fixed.