

Center for Strategic and International Studies

TRANSCRIPT

Event

Global Security Forum 2024: Gathering Strength in a  
Gathering Storm

**Keynote Discussion with The Honorable Avril Haines**

DATE

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FEATURING

**Avril Haines**

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CSIS EXPERTS

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Emily Harding: All right. Thank you all so much for joining us here today. I'm Emily Harding. I run the Intelligence, National Security, and Technology Program here at CSIS. My program, INT, seeks out the hardest problems – what the future intelligence work might look like, given the challenge and the opportunities that technology presents; how do we maintain necessary secrecy, but also open up to allies and build trust with the American people?

Today's keynote speaker has been a true visionary leader for the IC on these issues, also one of my most favorite former bosses. Avril Haines is the Director of National Intelligence and the first woman to hold the role, also the first woman to be deputy national security adviser, deputy director of CIA. She has a long and impressive resume, including, I found out last night, she was a physics major in college. What can this woman not do?

But more impressive, she is a wonderful human being. She works hard. She really listens. She's decisive but is also unfailingly kind. She is a steady hand on the wheel in a gathering storm.

Our moderator today is another trailblazer and a woman I deeply admire. Suzanne Spaulding is senior adviser and director of the Defending Democratic Institutions Project here at CSIS. Many times in her career she has looked around corners to prevent catastrophe, as undersecretary of what is now CISA, on the Cyber Solarium Commission, and as legal counsel to SSCI, HPSCI and CIA.

With that, over to you, Suzanne.

Honorable Suzanne Spaulding: Great. Thank you very much, Emily. And we're really excited about your new project and looking forward to hearing more about it as time goes on.

Honorable Avril Haines: And two fans of you – I think, on the stage as well. So thank you. (Laughter.)

Hon. Spaulding: Exactly.

Hon. Haines: Absolutely.

Hon. Spaulding: But thrilled to have you here. You know, I was thinking about the first time that I ever heard about you was from our mutual friend, Mary DeRosa –

Hon. Haines: Oh, my goodness.

Hon. Spaulding: – who was the legal adviser at the NSC, I think, at the time. And she was telling me about this amazingly impressive woman that she had worked

with at the State Department, who was wicked smart and works so hard, and just an incredibly decent person. And, lo and behold, she brought you over as deputy, and –

Hon. Haines: One of my favorite bosses.

Hon. Spaulding: Yes.

Hon. Haines: She was extraordinary.

Hon. Spaulding: Yeah, yeah, yeah. So just great to have you here. Thank you for taking the time.

The theme, as you know, of this conference is Gathering Storm, Gathering Strength.

Hon. Haines: Yeah.

Hon. Spaulding: And so let's start with the gathering storm. You know, give us a sense, not just of sort of the threat landscape out there, but particularly, you know, in the context of coalescing, right, whether it's the gathering of various adversaries or the coalescence that's coming about as a result of technology. How do you see that storm gathering?

Hon. Haines: Yeah, absolutely. Well, let me just start by saying how much I appreciate, frankly, the excuse to get out of my office, but also to be here and to have the opportunity to talk to you.

And Suzanne, you are one of the most remarkable people I've had the chance to work with. And the work that you're doing here, I think, is so important, that John is doing across CSIS. I cannot tell you how much we rely on the expertise, on the papers, on the thinking that goes on in this institution. And it is really an extraordinary gift to the country, frankly, from a national-security perspective.

So in terms of the gathering storm, which I have to say is really – it feels like the right moniker for today's moment in so many respects. We do our annual threat assessment, and one of the challenges is trying to capture the breadth of the, frankly, increasingly complex and interconnected threat landscape that we're facing today. And, you know, and as we try to sort of think about how to capture it, we talk about three sets of challenges that we're facing in today's landscape that kind of get to this question, I think.

The first is strategic competition with authoritarian powers that are really trying to undermine the rules-based order and ultimately undermine the

sort of open international system that the United States has been such a part of ultimately crafting. And we and our allies, quite obviously, rely on that system and on the rules-based order and our partners really for trade, for commerce, for open-information flow, for all of the things that we see as being critical to actually prospering in today's world in many respects. And that's sort of the first set of challenges that we talk a fair amount about. And, of course, we're talking about China and we're talking about Russia in that context, Iran, North Korea, et cetera.

Then the second set of challenges that we describe are really kind of intensifying and rapidly shifting transnational threats, many of which interconnect with that sort of broader strategic-competition landscape, whether it's in the context of cybercrime or climate change or terrorism or health security or transnational organized crime. There's just a whole range of things that we try to sort of lift up in that context. And again, often, you know, cybercrime can be engaged in actors who are interested in making money, but it also is true that some of those same institutions can be actually proxies for state actors under certain circumstances to go after attacks and there's all kinds of kind of interconnections between these different landscapes.

The third set of challenges that we're focusing on now are really kind of localized and regional conflicts or potential conflicts as tensions are rising that have the potential for cascading or already are, you know, ultimately affecting cascading impact, not just for neighboring countries in the region but often having oversized impact and, obviously, the conflict in the Middle East right now in the context of Gaza is an example of this.

But there are many others that we're watching and, again, there's that sort of interconnectedness and it's against a landscape with key emerging trends that make this even more complicated – new and emerging technologies, economic strain in various spaces, and environmental changes – and I think what this all kind of, you know, boils down to in a sense is, first of all, it is creating a fair amount of instability. This is one of the – you know, and that sort of sense of this gathering storm of what will happen next and how significant will it be.

And the second piece is just from a parochial perspective it makes it especially challenging for us in the intelligence community to actually provide you with the indication and warning that you want and expect for what is about to happen, how is it about to happen, how should we better prepare ourselves for these moments. But this sort of systemic effect of so many of the things that we're looking at makes that actually quite difficult to do.

And the final thing I'd say is that it is putting a lot of burden on our institutions, which need to be increasingly agile and really have the extraordinary talent and expertise that's needed to address so many of these issues and understand the implications between them.

At the same time it is also prompting, I think, a need – increasing need, and I think all of us in these positions have seen this over the years, but just for U.S. leadership in trying to manage all of these issues with our partners and allies because there really isn't an issue that we're facing that we don't need our partners and allies to help us address.

So that's sort of the – yeah, probably too long and very broad statement.

Hon. Spaulding: That's great. It's a great –

(Break.)

Hon. Spaulding: (In progress following break) – leaning into these divisions that are such a prominent part of our society today and using information operations as a way to exacerbate these tensions, and it is a huge challenge, I think, both because we have kind of atrophied, my sense is, our capabilities in that information space over years and because it is so politically charged now.

What do you see in that space as we're in this run-up to an election in 2024? You know, how big a deal is this? What do you see and what's your sense of how well positioned we are to address it?

Hon. Haines: Yeah. That's a lot and, obviously, an area too that you're an expert in, Suzanne, as well and have worked on for some time.

I am – so, obviously, we spend a lot of time looking at what foreign actors are doing in this space and, you know, we publish in particular in relation to the election security threat and intelligence community assessment on an annual basis and in relation to particular elections that are coming up or things like that and what we see is – I mean, Russia is, obviously, sort of top of mind in this area.

Russia has been engaging in information operations against the United States in a sense for decades. This is not something that is new, but nevertheless continues to focus in on effectively narratives that are intended to, ultimately, denigrate the United States' global standing in the world; also to undermine democratic institutions, democratic processes, undermining democracy as a general matter; looks to sow sociopolitical and socioeconomic divisions in our culture and in our society; and then goes after, also, specific policy arguments such as, for example, Western

support for Ukraine. And we see these as sort of major initiatives that they support.

They are quite sophisticated when it comes to using new technologies in this space. They, you know, use generative AI. They use other tools to try to make themselves better at their messaging in this area, to become more sophisticated. And they are also, you know, increasingly able to exploit, in a sense, commercial firms that are engaging in certain information, you know –

Hon. Spaulding: Activities.

Hon. Haines: – activities globally using platforms and so on. And it makes it much harder for us to really attribute, in a sense, some of the information specifically to Russia, and certainly in a way that we're able to disclose without hurting sort of sources and methods in these spaces.

And that is kind of a generic, you know, kind of sense of this is what we see across the board. And I'll come back to some of the impact of this in a moment and how we're positioned to deal with it.

China is slightly different in the sense that they are also engaging in influence operations, as we see it. They also have relatively similar narratives that they're focused on – so also about undermining democracy, also about sort of denigrating U.S. leadership, and so on. But they are – they are more focused than Russia is, for example, in promoting what they see as pro-China policies and pro-sort of the CCP, the Communist Party, efforts and so on in their space. And they do – they're not quite as sophisticated as Russian information operations generally in terms of their use of generative AI or other things like that, but –

(Break.)

Hon. Spaulding: Ready? OK.

Hon. Haines: So one of the things that we've seen – and just to give you an example of the impact this has – I think we try to counter disinformation –

(Break.)

Hon. Haines: Oh, sorry, guys.

(Break.)

Hon. Haines: So we try to counter disinformation in the context of the invasion of Ukraine.

And one of the key aspects of it was really about, basically, Russia was trying to promote obviously a pretext for the invasion of Ukraine. And we wanted to say, look, here is the kind of pretext that they're looking to try to create in that context. And as we looked back on how successful we were, essentially, in trying to counter that disinformation, I think, you know, obviously, you judge for yourself within the United States. But what we saw in Europe was that we were actually pretty successful in countering Russian disinformation in that scenario, among the populations within Europe. We were not successful in Africa, in the continent of Africa, or really in South America.

And it was very interesting, as we sort of brought in a group of experts that were looking at essentially, you know, the polling, why weren't we successful here, what was sort of the way in which that was absorbed, a lot of it was based on the fact that, frankly, in many of the populations that we were looking at in the continent of Africa and in South America, they started with a narrative that Russia had been promoting, which is that NATO was the provocateur, that NATO was escalating this conflict, and was ultimately responsible for the actions that they were taking. And they were sort of defending themselves against a growing NATO.

And that put them in a position where they were much more skeptical of what we were saying about essentially Russian disinformation. And, you know, most scholars, I gather, that work in this area will tell you that, basically, it is much easier to – essentially to, like, basic – compel audience or to give them information that they are going to think is compelling if it is relatively consistent with what they already believe to be true and know. And so suggesting that Russia was actually creating a pretext for their invasion of Ukraine, right, was so inconsistent with the narrative that they had accepted about NATO as the provocateur that it made it much harder for that to come through. So a rather interesting discussion.

(Break.)

Hon. Haines:           Anyway –

Hon. Spaulding:       Yeah. So I think this is such a –

Hon. Haines:           I feel like we should talk about Gaza. (Laughs.)

Hon. Spaulding:       So I think this is just such – right?

Hon. Haines:           Yeah.

Hon. Spaulding: I think this is just such an important topic, and I'm sorry that you've been interrupted multiple times as we've tried to discuss it. But really, you know, appreciate these insights.

And I do worry a little bit that we tend to put things in boxes. You've given – you are presenting us with a comprehensive picture here in how these things all relate to each other, right? So there can be multiple objectives from our – those who push information operations and narratives, right, not just one, right?

Hon. Haines: Yeah, exactly.

Hon. Spaulding: And so information narratives around Ukraine and the fact that NATO was the provocateur, and that we should not be supporting Ukraine, can have the effect both of denying potentially funding for Ukraine, which fortunately was passed last night.

Hon. Haines: I know.

Hon. Spaulding: But also then, you know, having an impact, potentially, on people's views on the outcome of the '24 election, right? And so, again, it's that notion of gathering, of looking at things in a holistic way. And so let's talk a little bit about how we gather our forces together. How we gather strength. This is a time when we really need all hands on deck.

So you have the responsibility of gathering the strength of the 18 different intelligence entities. Tell us a little bit about how that is going. What are your greatest challenges, and particularly in terms of, you know, getting the intelligence community both to operate with the kind of jointness that we heard at least aspired to by that wonderful panel that Seth lead. I think it's wonderful that while it was impressive to see all those uniforms up here, we have the entire intelligence community here represented in this one powerful woman, right? (Laughter.) We didn't need to bring 18 people up here. But talk to us about how you, you know, establish those priorities in a way – for the community, which is one of your key responsibilities – in a way that really does help to bring a joint effort.

Hon. Haines: Yeah, and it's an area that I know is close to your heart, given how much you were a part of our founding, in many respects, in the IRTPA and otherwise. I mean, it is – it's a – obviously, you know, as we were talking about, 18 is a lot of elements, right? That includes the ODNI and it's an extraordinary, you know, intelligence community. It does highlight, to some extent, the need for having sort of somebody who's responsible for ensuring that we're actually talking to each other and integrating and ultimately serving the nation in a kind of cohesive way. And I think, in many respects, counterterrorism is a place where we've really shined in



terms of our capacity to do that, and it really was born out of the crisis, obviously, of 9/11 in this country and the whole reason for the institution that I sit in, but it is – it definitely continues to teach us lessons across a range of areas. And I think that is sort of one aspect of this, is really, when you've got a very challenging, you know, problem set like terrorism in the nation, you really do need this extraordinary effort that brings together the capacity of the entire U.S. government but certainly, within the intelligence community, our capacity to work together on these issues.

That is increasingly true today. I mean, one of the things that I'm really fascinated by is the fact that even over the course of my, you know, sort of career within the intelligence community, I have seen how our different INTs – I don't know if this will make sense to all of you. We have HUMINT, right? So human intelligence. We have GEOINT, which is, essentially, imagery, that type of intelligence. You think of SIGINT, signals intelligence. So all of these different INTs – MASINT is, like, measurements, and so on – they work together when – or, sort of, they work best when they're working together, so these are all different types of intelligence that really need to need to sort of tip and cue and enable each other in order to give us a better picture of what's happening. And this is exactly the kind of not really very sexy or exciting thing that, you know, people talk about when they think about intelligence, but it is so fundamental to us doing our job more effectively, and that is a big piece of – what we try to do is actually bring together the different capabilities within the intelligence community so that we're leveraging each other's capacities, so we're not duplicating things, so that we're actually producing what is needed, and then connecting it to what the policymakers, the warfighters, the operators really need to make decisions.

And I think one of the things that you learn quickly in the intelligence community, and if you're part of it, then you know this well: There are a lot of places where people are very excited about, you know, getting some exquisite piece of information that was very challenging to achieve and that you're very excited about, but it really means nothing unless you're able to deliver it to somebody who can actually take action on it, in a form that is useful to them, right?

So this whole question of actually bringing together those capabilities in a way that allows us to deliver information to people who are making decisions so that they can make better decisions is so much a part of our sort of reason to live, and that is, you know, also fundamental to the type of integration that we do. We are also, you know, working on and, again, in this – I don't know, in this moment in our history I think it's maybe challenging to imagine this, but so much of what we do and particularly when we're thinking about strategic competition, our long-term

investments in our community that allow us to actually be more effective over time, and these are the kinds of things that take years – programs.

If you're building satellites, if you're thinking about really important platforms that are going to withstand the test of time, if you're thinking about investing in research and development and science and technology, really making us better over time, you need to make those long-term investments, and that's a lot of what we do as well, which is bringing together the community to figure out what actually makes sense, what's a vision for the future that we're all working towards and can do? And that is something, again, that's quite hard to do in government, but I have to say, like, we work – you know, to the point about the challenges – and I know we're all seeing them when getting a budget passed or other things like that – I will say that our committees, both in the House and in the Senate, work very well with us on a bipartisan basis and it is an extraordinary thing to see that. And they really do – they make it possible for us to do that kind of long-term planning to the greatest extent that we're able to. So I really appreciate that piece of, yeah, the work.

Hon. Spaulding: Yeah. And a key element of that, and particularly with regard to the relationship with the oversight committees, is building, sustaining trust, right?

Hon. Haines: Yeah.

Hon. Spaulding: And that's part of being able to bring all hands on deck. And I want to ask you, particularly in the international context in terms of our relationship with our liaison, right –

Hon. Haines: Yeah.

Hon. Spaulding: – those really vital relationships for the intelligence community. You know, and again, it goes back to the division within our country and some of the unraveling of traditional consensus, the fact that we – you know, we did get a two-year reauthorization of 702. We did get an aid package. But both of those were really hard-fought –

Hon. Haines: Yeah.

Hon. Spaulding: – and very close; you know, almost didn't get over that finish line.

Hon. Haines: Yeah.

Hon. Spaulding: Do you see an impact on those liaison relationships coming from, as they watch what's happening in this country and how politically charged we are and how the consensus is shifting, if you will, do you – is that having

an impact? Or are those relationships, much like, I think, of the morale of the intelligence community, people just sort of put their nose down and they get the job done?

Hon. Haines: Yeah.

Hon. Spaulding: How do you see it? What's happening?

Hon. Haines: I think the relationships are actually quite good with our liaison partners across the board. But that doesn't mean that you're not – you're still raising a relevant issue, which is to say that – I mean, one of the things I thought was very interesting is that in a really wide swath of liaison engagements, people were asking me about the chances of 702 and whether or not we would be able to get reauthorization. And I suspect a lot of you have had the same experience.

Also, again, not surprisingly, tremendous number of people were focused on whether or not we were going to be able to get assistance passed for Ukraine in order to support them. And honestly, you know, the degree to which folks outside of the United States watch our political system cannot be overstated. It is really extraordinary how detailed their questions are about how is this proceeding, what are the chances of it getting through the House, how is this – you know, a lot of sophistication in the way that they're thinking about this.

And part of that is because many partners throughout the world rely on our capacity to essentially provide the kind of global assessments that we provide on what are the kind of key threats that are coming towards us. And our work together is fundamental to our capacity to do that.

And I do think one of the things, you know, that sort of was made very public in the context of Ukraine, but does happen across the board in a range of areas, is, yes, we were downgrading and sharing a lot of information with our allies and partners in that context, but we were also enriching it by virtue of the conversations we were able to have with others.

And it isn't that every, you know, intelligence service agreed with us on every aspect of it, but rather that we had an opportunity to have a very good conversation and talk to folks who had expertise in different areas and who were able to say, well, I think this might be why this is happening, and so on. And it really does help us be better at our jobs as a consequence. So it is very much a two-way street in that respect. And I do think those relationships are incredibly important in our capacity to actually then take action and address the threats that we're facing.

I would also say that in that sort of gathering-our-strength way, we obviously have tremendous strength in this country and globally in partnerships that are, you know, with other states as well, with the private sector, with universities, with research institutes, with, you know, other organizations that are nongovernmental, with state and, you know, city and local authorities and so on. And increasingly we are trying to effectively facilitate those partnerships in a way that allows us to both take better advantage of them.

And I think just maybe two words on that. Is that all right?

Hon. Spaulding: Yeah, absolutely.

Hon. Haines: I think there's one aspect of this which is that basically the reality is – and I think we all understand this – there are many non sort of state entities, as we sometimes refer to them, that have geopolitical impact that are separate from state actors, right? So you can look at things like the state of California has something like the fifth-largest economy in the world, right? There are other entities that are sub-federal that are incredibly important. And the fact is there are cities and sort of sub-federal entities around the world that are also critically important to what's happening in the landscape. And we have to understand that, engage with them, and think that through.

There are also many multinational corporations that are ultimately having an impact on our geopolitical landscape and understanding that and trying to evaluate that as part of our work is critical. If you're, you know, somebody in policy on climate you are actually interested in what multinational corporations are doing, how they're approaching investments in these areas and so on and how they're working, and we need to be able to understand that and we need to have some access to the expertise and knowledge that is in the private sector, that is in technology companies where a lot of the sort of cutting-edge innovation is happening and so on.

And so we have been trying to create opportunities for that. Like, we have a phenomenal group of experts in science, engineering, technology, medicine, that basically are available to us through an IC Studies Board at the National Academies of Science that we can ask questions of that give us the ability to tap into that kind of knowledge and expertise.

We have other types of mechanisms like that that help us do that. We have work that we do with universities where we do some innovation, where we think through hard problems, and I think this is a part of gathering our strength in many respects to actually be capable of addressing some of the challenges that we're facing today and getting into the talent – the sort of

expertise, the knowledge, the innovation – doing partner exchanges in different spaces, thinking through how we’re going to promote innovation, whether or not we have the right connections with small and medium-sized enterprises around the country that may be coming up with new things that we need to better understand or research institutes that are working on health security and doing things but there might be if it’s misused another angle on it that we need to be able to understand so we can address that kind of issue.

It is fundamental to our work and I think you’ll see more and more of this and I know as, you know, somebody who’s been in government for a long time and has often had the talking point of we need to improve our public-private partnerships and so on, like, I really do you think we are now making some big moves that are going to help us to be more effective in this space and it’s really fundamental to our capacity to be better in the future.

Hon. Spaulding: Yeah. Yeah. Absolutely. I certainly can attest to that from my role at DHS.

Hon. Haines: Yes.

Hon. Spaulding: These are – as you say, we’ve talked about these public-private partnerships –

Hon. Haines: Ages.

Hon. Spaulding: – to a point where it means nothing and now it’s really essential that we operationalize those kinds of collaborations.

And part of what you’re addressing there is the need to make sure that you reach out to a broad range of perspectives and insights, and I think this goes too to the diversity issue which has been somewhat controversial across the board for whatever reason in this country but certainly in the intelligence community and criticisms that emphasis on bringing diverse – making sure that you are really consciously bringing diverse perspectives into the intelligence community is actually making us less safe.

So I wanted to give you just a minute to address that and then we’re going to take a couple questions –

Hon. Haines: Yeah. Go to questions.

Hon. Spaulding: – from the audience. And, Seth, we’re going to go a little long.

Yeah, go ahead.

Hon. Haines: All right. Sorry, I feel like I've talked too much.

So here is how I think about it.

Hon. Spaulding: Well, everyone is here to hear you. Yeah. (Laughter.)

Hon. Haines: So here's how I think about this and I really – I would just say also having been a civil servant in government for many years and serving different political parties at different times, like, it is – it has been so fundamental to me that diversity, equity, inclusion, frankly, is something that makes us better and is something that we should be promoting within government and I'll just give you my own kind of view on why it is so critical.

I think it is critical to us doing our jobs. It is very hard to imagine an intelligence community that is capable of understanding the world without diverse perspectives, understandings, experience, and knowledge within the intelligence community. That is sort of fundamental to our work.

It is also true that we need the best talent and the best talent resides across a diverse reflection of America. That is also fundamental and we – when I go out and I try to do recruiting at universities they want to know how is our diversity, equity, inclusion program, what do our demographics look like, are we in fact reflecting the country in the people that serve in the intelligence community and I want to be able to tell them that we do and I want to show them how we're working on these issues.

It is also true that there is a lot of scholarship that tells you that when you have a more diverse institution you are more innovative and that is really – there's extraordinary scholarship on this that really backs that up. It is another part of us being good at our mission. So that is one piece of it.

There's another piece for me, which is to say that as a public institution in a democratic society I think we should reflect what the country has to offer. I think that when people look at us – and trust is an issue for the intelligence community, as we've discussed. This is a critical aspect of our work. I think we know that public institutions have lost some trust, right?

And that's across the board. It's in the United States. It's true in Europe. We've seen it – you know, the trend lines in these areas. We also know that in the intelligence community we are more effective at our jobs when we are trusted by the public, because then they listen to us when we say there's a threat, you should pay attention to this, right? It is fundamental to our work. And there is just no question in my experience that people

trust institutions when they see versions of themselves in those institutions. It is something to actually bring together that kind of diversity that exists in the country to make us stronger, to be more effective. That is all part of why I see this as so important to our work. So that's why.

The second piece, though, of it, from our perspective, is it's not a distraction. It's fundamental to actually creating the environment and the institution that we think can be most effective. It's also something where the way we work this is we're trying to make sure that we have actually the data that tells us what we look like and how we're moving forward in terms of promotions, in terms of all of the different things that you might imagine that actually create equity within a community, and that we are then able to do barrier studies when we see issues and to discover what the challenges are that people are facing in different parts of the institution, and then addressing them.

And those are the kinds of things that we try to do in an extremely transparent way. It's much more transparent with Congress, because so much of what we do is classified, including, for example, the number of people in our workforce, many of the people, obviously, in our workforce we can't disclose who they are, et cetera. But this is the kind of work that we're trying to do in making it as transparent as – you know, completely transparent to Congress, but also as transparent as we can even within our workforces, so that we can show this. And then ultimately, we produce an annual demographic report that tries to help the public see at least the broad statistics that we're operating under. But I really – I think it's very important.

Hon. Spaulding:

Yeah. Great. And part of what, you know, the challenge there, is developing that pipeline of folks to come in and encouraging them, inspiring them to come in. And we've got a lot of young scholars here at CSIS, and hopefully watching. And one of them has asked if you could talk about what inspired you to go into the national security world. But also, you know, how – you were on the commission on public service – military and public service. And I know that one of the key recommendations was to reinvigorate civics in this country, something I'm very passionate about. But, you know, how do we inspire young people, particularly in this time when there's, you know, significant mistrust, again, of the intelligence community? You know, what inspired you? How do you think about inspiring others?

Hon. Haines:

Yeah. Honestly, I can't think of a better job. And I'm being totally honest. And I realize I'm parochial in this respect. But it is – first of all, it gives you a sense that you're contributing to something that's bigger than yourself, and ultimately, you know, doing something with meaning. And it's just – that's a high that's hard to accomplish any other way, in many respects.

It is also working with some of the most extraordinary people I've ever had the opportunity to work with. I think that when you talk to people about their time in government, almost across the board one of the first things they'll say is I miss the people. And the people – you know, you don't join the intelligence community if you're interested in fame or fortune, because you're sure not going to get it. And it is – you know, the reality is, like, those people who come, despite the fact that they're not going to make a huge paycheck that they could make someplace else, or, you know, they're not interested in glorifying themselves but are really interested in getting work done, in doing something with meaning, in working on some of the most challenging issues that face us, is what inspires them.

And that's a lot of fun to work with. The third is, for me, it is I feel more alive when I'm learning new things. And I find that that's true every day in the intelligence – I mean, one of my favorite moments of the day, even as it can be deeply depressing, is, frankly, reading through the intelligence that comes in overnight, different products that have been produced by the intelligence community, and sort of as we're pulling together the president's daily brief. And it's just extraordinary what you read about, because there is talent and thought that's going into so many different aspects of life. And you know, it can be about sort of how scarcity of certain resources in a part of the world is creating tension that may spill over to certain spaces, and really understanding the details of that is what gives us that kind of insight into it. It can be something about a technology that you've never, you know, thought about before but somebody's come up with that is deeply concerning. (Laughs.) And you know, it's just – it's an amazing wealth of sort of intellectual food, in a sense.

And the final thing is, it's an adventure. And that is, I think, for many younger folks, you come into the government and – I mean, look, when I was – when I came in, I remember thinking to myself as an intern, I definitely don't have the skill to do this, like, and I don't know why anybody's put me in charge of doing something – (laughs) – you know? And even as, like, a first-year civil servant and so on, because you're – it's an all-hands-on-deck kind of situation in almost every office in government, and you're being asked to do things that have meaning because there's nobody else who's going to do it, so – (laughs) – you better get with it. And that is very exciting, and it's something that you don't often see, frankly, in the private sector and other spaces.

So there's a lot of reason to join. And I really do hope you do. And I recognize that the trust issue and this question of, you know, how do you see the intelligence community comes into it. And when I talk to – I try to get out to talk occasionally to high-school students on what they're



thinking about and how they perceive the IC, and you know, my view is if you have concerns that's completely rational, right? I mean, I – it's not as if I think everything works the way it should. I would – (laughs) – like to change some things. And you should come into the government so you actually have a chance to affect it, right, and take responsibility for what our institutions look like, what our decision-making is, make us better by joining. So I do hope you come with all of your integrity and ethics and, you know, views about what should be improved, because we need that too.

Hon. Spaulding: Yeah. Timothy Snyder, in his essay "On Tyranny," talks about don't talk about our institutions unless you are willing to make them yours. He talks about adopt an institution, right?

Hon. Haines: Yeah. Yeah. Yes.

Hon. Spaulding: Avril, you know, so you've managed to end us on a hopeful and inspiring note – (laughter) – despite the gathering storm. And I know I will sleep better tonight knowing that you are doing the work that you're doing, and all the men and women in our intelligence community who are working so hard to keep us safe. So thank you so much for sharing with us today and being patient with, you know, the format. Yeah. Thank you.

Hon. Haines: I sleep better knowing you're defending democracy. (Applause.)

(END.)