



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on January 6, 2017

Trump Names Indiana Senator Dan Coats as Director of National Intelligence

Members of President-elect Donald Trump's transition team [said Thursday](#) that he has picked Republican Indiana Senator Dan Coats to head the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI). Coats is a hardliner on Russia but soft on the Second Amendment.

Coats would spearhead changes to make the ODNI more efficient. Created in 2004 to coordinate the information-gathering efforts of 17 separate agencies, the ODNI is currently headed by outgoing director James Clapper.



Clapper was unanimously confirmed for that position in August 2010 by the Senate, but sullied his own reputation, as well as that of his office, by lying to Congress in March of 2013. During a hearing by the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, Senator Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) asked Clapper: "Does the NSA [one of the agencies Clapper oversees] collect any type of data at all on millions or hundreds of millions of Americans?" Clapper, having been provided that question in advance, and knowing full well that the NSA had in fact been collecting data on an estimated 120 million Americans, lied: "No, sir."

Wyden gave Clapper another chance: "It does not?" Clapper persisted in his lie: "Not wittingly. There are cases where they could, inadvertently perhaps, collect [such data] but not wittingly."

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This moment in time was a turning point for Edward Snowden, who knew Clapper was lying, and who turned over data to WikiLeaks that proved the NSA was surveilling millions of Americans. During an interview in the following January, Snowden stated: "Sort of a breaking point was seeing the Director of National Intelligence, James Clapper, directly lie under oath to Congress ... seeing that really meant for me there was no going back."

Three months after Clapper lied, *The Guardian* published the first of a series of global surveillance document dumps that included a top secret court order showing that the NSA had collected phone records from over 120 million Verizon subscribers.

The very next day Clapper released a statement, admitting that yes, the NSA has been collecting "metadata" on millions of Americans. Two days later he was interviewed by NBC's Andrea Mitchell, explaining his lie: "I responded in what I thought was the most truthful ... or least untruthful ... manner, by saying no" when he testified.

This prompted calls for his removal from the ODNI, including one by Representative Justin Amash (R-Mich.), who declared: "It now appears clear that the Director National Intelligence, James Clapper, lied under oath to Congress and the American people," that "perjury is a serious crime ... [and] Clapper should resign immediately."



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Senator Rand Paul agreed: “The Director of National Intelligence ... did directly lie to Congress, which is against the law.” Paul later suggested that Clapper might deserve prison time for his testimony.

Dan Coats will bring his experience as a member of the Senate Intelligence Committee to bear in the new administration, providing perhaps a counterbalance to the president-elect’s expressed willingness to work with Russian President Vladimir Putin. When Putin “annexed” Crimea in 2014, Coats was outraged, pushing President Obama to impose sanctions on Putin. Putin responded by banning Coats from traveling to Russia.

Coats will likely meet resistance from some members of Trump’s administration over the Second Amendment. He supported the Brady Bill, as well as the Feinstein Amendment that would “restrict the manufacture, transfer and possession of certain semi-automatic assault weapons and large capacity ammunition feeding devices.”

The pick of Coats completes Trump’s nominations to his top national security posts, including retired General James Mattis as secretary of the Department of Defense, retired Lt. General Michael Flynn as his national security advisor, and Representative Mike Pompeo (R-Kan.) as director of the CIA.

Among the coalition of intelligence agencies Coats would oversee are the Department of the Treasury (and its Internal Revenue Service), the Drug Enforcement Administration, the CIA, the FBI, the Defense Intelligence Agency, the Department of Energy, the Department of Homeland Security, the National Security Agency, and the Department of State.

An Ivy League graduate and former investment advisor, Bob is a regular contributor to The New American magazine and blogs frequently at LightFromTheRight.com, primarily on economics and politics. He can be reached at badelman@thenewamerican.com.



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