

## **JAMES MARCINKOWSKI**

Good morning. I am Jim Marcinkowski. It is an honor to appear before this Committee and I want to thank all of the members for making this effort, especially in a time, as described by Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, where “we have entered what may very well prove to be the most dangerous security environment the world has known.” It is because of the danger of these times that the unprecedented exposure of a clandestine intelligence officer is so detrimental to our intelligence capabilities and national security.

I would like to address two separate issues, first, the unprecedented act of exposing a clandestine intelligence officer and the consequential damages, and second, the myths reported in the media that tend to downplay the seriousness of this event.

To my knowledge, the United States government has never before released the name of a clandestine officer. Until recently, there was never even a question that such an outrageous act would unequivocally cause immediate danger and damage to our national security.

Many of us who have spoken publicly in outrage over this incident were classmates of Ambassador Wilson’s wife.

The vitally important message I bring to you this morning is simple yet devastating. My classmates and I have been betrayed. Together, we have kept the secret of each other’s identities for over eighteen years. Each and every one of us have kept that secret, whether we were in the CIA, in other government service, or in the private sector.

This issue is not just about a blown cover. It is about the destruction of the very essence, the core, of human intelligence collection activities – plausible deniability – apparently for partisan domestic political reasons. There are only two entities that can definitively identify a clandestine officer, the officer himself or herself, and the government that employs them. When operating overseas or even working in the U.S., the cover of the majority of CIA employees may be a mere “fig leaf.” Someone may suspect or presume that a particular person is a CIA officer, but that officer still has the ability to deny it. Plausible deniability, combined with the personal skills of the individual officer, provides the security for the officer and all of his or her contacts. Blown cover probably happens more than anyone would like. The deliberate exposure and identification of Ambassador Wilson’s wife, by our own government, was unprecedented, unnecessary, harmful and dangerous.

While there may be a damage assessment conducted specific to this case, there is a host of incalculable damage that flows from this exposure:

- damage to our ability to assuage the security concerns and personal safety of our current and potential agents overseas;
- damage to our reputation to maintain confidentiality with friendly foreign

governments who share intelligence with the United States;

- damage to our image in attracting our own talented young people who may be contemplating working for the CIA;
- damage to the credibility of this country's efforts to safeguard the wellbeing of its own citizens; and
- perhaps striking at the heart of the matter, regardless whether this incident falls within the purview of the criminal law, what moral message has now been sent as how this government will respond to the misdeeds of the keepers of the public trust?

Second, the arguments being made in the media in an apparent attempt to downplay the effects of this incident demonstrate a complete lack of understanding of undercover operations.

It defies logic to pretend that anyone involved in this exposure did not know they were dealing with someone who was an employee of the CIA, which is by definition, a spy agency. To have any effectiveness, the agency relies upon secrecy. Not even the janitor at the agency should report that he or she works for the CIA since that would, or could, make that person a target of a hostile intelligence agency.

It has been reported that Ambassador Wilson's wife's status as a CIA employee was not important to the initial story. If the identity wasn't important, then why was that information in the story? The disclosure of the identity was evidently newsworthy since it was included in the story that was reported by the national media. The disclosure of the identity must have been important to the motive of the story since the disclosure was highlighted and given additional credence and buttressed by the notation that the status of Ambassador Wilson's wife was known to "senior officials." One can assume that most people do not think that "senior officials" are familiar with the clerical staff at the CIA. Therefore the agent known to the "senior officials" is implicated as an important, and therefore knowledgeable, person. The agent's identity was obviously included to give the entire report more credibility and to maximize the effect of the other information in the story.

It has been reported that the release of this officer's identity was not deliberate. How can anyone even pretend that the disclosure of a CIA employee's identity to a reporter could be done by accident? The fact is that the release of this information by "senior officials" was deliberate and done for a purpose. It is equally clear that the purpose of these "senior officials" was certainly not to advance the national security of the United States. Reasonable minds cannot differ as to the deliberate nature of this action by these "senior officials." (Anyone who would care to try to portray this action as merely negligent, as opposed to deliberate, should also be prepared to explain how anyone so completely inept as to divulge this information by accident ever became a "senior official" in any organization, let alone an organization running the country.)

It must be assumed that “senior administration officials” would have at least a rudimentary working knowledge of the media, an understanding of what is “on” or “off the record,” what information is “on background,” and so forth. The fact that such basic ground rules, if you will, were not used to protect the identity of Ambassador Wilson’s wife exceeds any reasonable definition of gross negligence. This disclosure was not an accident, it was a cynical effort to advance an interest deemed so important by these “senior officials” as to potentially place lives at risk. The interest being advanced by this disclosure was certainly not national security.

Somehow the issue of disclosing the names of intelligence workers must be addressed and it must be resolved. This Congress has appropriated billions of dollars for use in enhancing the security of this nation’s homeland. National security is the primary purpose of the government. Intelligence gathering regarding foreign threats has been highlighted as a continuing national priority. Living, breathing Americans, and the foreign nationals they are able to recruit, gathering information, piece by piece, are essential to the security of the United States.

The intelligence community was roundly criticized after September 11 as having let the country down. I am certain that every single person working for the CIA re-doubled his or her commitment to superior performance and service on behalf of this country on September 11. To perform well, to do the job of enhancing this country’s security, requires that the entire government work as a team with a shared goal and with a clear understanding of the risks that face the country and those intelligence officers committed to protecting this country.

Obviously, these “senior officials” lacked that clear understanding. The harm, short and longer term, created by these “senior officials” callous and complete and total disregard for the health, welfare and safety of intelligence employees and their foreign contacts cannot be overstated. I am speaking out to highlight this problem when others are not able to do so. I can tell you that I am certain that intelligence officers and their contacts the world over are looking to see what the solution to this problem will be.

The only adequate solution will require the resolve to create both a short- and long-term situation that results in rebuilding and restoring the level of confidence needed by our people in the field to perform the job they are so willing to do. One of the tools required to do the job in the field has just been severely compromised by these “senior administration officials.” The people in the field, if they could be here, would ask that you fashion a response that would be sufficient to restore your own confidence if you were at risk while working in the field to protect this country. Anything less decreases our ability to protect and to defend ourselves - that cannot be acceptable.