



A Washington Report Delivered to the Silicon Valley Manufacturing Group April 14, 2004

I'd like to thank Carl Guardino and the Silicon Valley Manufacturing Group. This is actually the fourth time in the past few years that I've had the opportunity to address this group and every time I come back the group is bigger and there are more people enthused about what they do, so it's a great pleasure to be here today.

Youth Awards

Wherever I go, I like to recognize some of the good things students do. Because we hear so much about schools with failing grades, about students who aren't doing well, we sometimes forget that within our own institutions we have students who are really doing so well. But in this case, I am going to take a slightly different tack.

Because the Silicon Valley Manufacturing Group has been involved with a program called City Year, I want to recognize two college students who have replaced their divot and given back to the community through the City Year program.

City Year – which is a member of AmeriCorps -- is a one-year program for 17-24 year olds interested in full-time service to their communities. I am told the Silicon Valley Manufacturing Group helps sponsor the program locally. And so I would like the two recipients of the award I am about to give to come to the podium. The first is Jane Ngo and the second is Jie Zheng.

Jane Ngo

Jane attends the University of Virginia, has a 3.6 college GPA, and had a 3.9 GPA in high school in McLean, Virginia.

Jane wanted to join AmeriCorps since first entering college. She took off a year from college after her third year to spend volunteering with City Year in San Jose.

Now what does she do? She teaches 8th grade at Rogers Middle School and runs an after-school homework and life-skills program for at-risk students. She leads math and reading programs during the school day and a lunchtime homework and tutoring center. She spends two nights a week teaching English at the Third Street Community Center. After City Year, she will return to the University of Virginia where she is pursuing a B.A. in sociology and anthropology.

Currently part of the Distinguished Majors program in sociology, after graduation, she plans on entering a dual degree program in law and public administration. Clearly an accomplished young woman, San Jose is lucky to have her. So, I'd like to present this proclamation to her from you and me to say thank you and to encourage others to do the same thing.

Jie Zheng

Jie Zheng is 23 years old. (You're both lucky, you don't look your ages. You'll be grateful for that later in life). Jie is a local girl; she graduated from Palo Alto High School, and went on to Johns Hopkins University, where she received her B.S. in Biomedical Engineering with a minor in Computer Science. She plans to go to medical school after she completes the City Year program.

She is accompanied by her parents, Jimmy Zheng and Feng Chen. Jie earned a 4.0 GPA in high school and a 3.8 GPA in college. She was a Silicon Valley Scholar throughout high school and college. She decided to spend a year volunteering with City Year after college because she wanted the opportunity to work with people from diverse backgrounds.

She also works at Rogers Middle School in San Jose, teaches a 6th grade English Language Learners class and tutors 7th grade students in math and science. She runs an after school homework center in which she helps students to complete their homework and tracks their academic progress and is writing a curriculum on race, ethnicity and social action.

Iraq

As a Senator, I serve on five different committees. I spend on average two or three afternoons a week at meetings of the Select Committee on Intelligence. This is the oversight body of America's intelligence community which is comprised of more than a dozen agencies and has budgets that are tens of billions of dollars.

In the course of the almost three years that I have served on that committee, I have had a good opportunity to observe the practice of collecting and analyzing intelligence in our nation, to see its flaws, and also to hopefully come up with some solutions for the future.

Last night, President Bush was asked the question of whether his Administration has made any mistakes with regard to Iraq. In essence, he said he couldn't think of any. But I believe some very serious mistakes were made:

- First, believing that we would be greeted as liberators.
- Second, believing that the military effort could be successful with a limited number of troops.
- Third, firing the managers responsible for Iraq's water, electricity, sewer system and all the other critical parts of that country's infrastructure, along with the Iraqi army and police force.
- And finally, failing to provide a follow-on force that could have secured the Iraqi infrastructure from looters.

So, after the military operation was over, we were immediately behind the 8-ball and we have been trying to catch up ever since.

Additionally, this war was fought because the Administration contended there was a grave, growing, and yes, imminent threat to the region and to the United States from an Iraq that possessed and would use weapons of mass destruction. Indeed, Iraq had used weapons of mass destruction against its own Kurdish people and against Iranians in the war with Iran.

A specific claim was also made in the unclassified version of the National Intelligence Estimate that Saddam Hussein possessed chemical and biological weapons.

While we also received a classified version of the National Intelligence Estimate, I can't discuss that report, not the briefings we received in Committee. But the unclassified version is available on the web and I can discuss it.

Not only did the unclassified version say that Saddam Hussein possessed chemical and biological weapons, but that these weapons had most likely been deployed and could be used within 45 minutes, based on information from British intelligence sources.

And it mentioned unmanned aerial vehicles that could be used to attack the U.S. with chemical or biological warheads.

Based on this intelligence and on Secretary of State Colin Powell's testimony before the United Nations, I joined 76 members of the U.S. Senate to vote to give the President authorization to use force in Iraq.

Now, to date, no biological or chemical weapons have been found in Iraq, and no evidence has been found of an ongoing nuclear program. All of this is true despite inspections of literally thousands of high-priority spots by the military, and by a special Iraqi survey group formerly headed by Dr. David Kay.

Dr. Kay came before the Senate Armed Services Committee in public session and said he did not believe that any weapons of mass destruction would in fact be found.

So, two things seem clear to me now:

- First, the intelligence regarding Iraq's threat to others was deeply flawed.
- Second, we were misled by this Administration in a series of speeches and comments about Iraq.

These are very serious comments to make. I don't say them casually, but I believe they are true.

I don't believe if the mission had been just regime change that there would have been 77 votes in the Senate to authorize use of force. There certainly would not have been my vote, and there may not have been a majority.

Nonetheless, we are where we are. And I believe U.S. failure in Iraq would have profound implications.

It would increase the likelihood of civil war, Sunni against Shiite against Kurd, dash any possibility for the spread of democracy and human rights in the region, and it would certainly embolden Al Qaeda to believe that they could drive us from a country with terrorist tactics. America cannot tuck tail and run.

The questions now are:

- Whether the U.S. should turn over authority to an interim Iraqi regime on June 30?
- Whether we have enough troops in the country to help guarantee that Iraq does not erupt into civil war?
- And whether we can convince the international community to help stabilize Iraq?

As I mentioned, the Administration selected the date of June 30 to hand over sovereignty to the Iraqi people. The problem is that there is no plan that I know of to turn over the government. To whom do you turn it over?

If we are going to be successful going forward, there are a few areas where I think we need to concentrate.

Last week the President indicated that he would provide whatever troops and resources General Abizaid, commander of the U.S. forces in the region, felt were needed. General Abizaid has recently requested at least two brigades or more than 10,000 additional troops. Providing these troops is vital.

In the last few weeks, civilian and military convoys have been attacked and, increasingly, civilians from at least 12 countries have been taken hostage. Clearly, the conflict in Iraq has entered into a much more dangerous phase.

So, what can we do? I believe that it is vital that the United Nations and the international community be given a greater role in Iraq's transition to a new constitution and government, and in the oversight of economic restoration and rebuilding of the infrastructure.

The only force that Iraq could be turned over to, which would be credible internationally, and perhaps internally, would be the United Nations.

This would bring in the care and the concern of the entire world, and not just the United States, which, most unfortunately, is now intensely hated by many in the Muslim world.

It is a very serious situation that confronts our nation. A clear and comprehensive plan of action is needed. I had hoped that last night we would see that plan, and I still hope that it will be forthcoming in the future.

Let me also add my profound thanks to the men and women in our armed services who are serving so admirably.

Of the 690 U.S. soldiers killed in Iraq, 77 are Californians. Every time I write a note to their parents or loved ones, and learn how they died, my heart goes out to them.

I want them to know that we will conclude this mission. And if we fail to do so, it will only complicate and make the future more difficult.

9/11 Commission Hearings

Let me turn now to the hearings before the 9/11 Commission. I would like to begin by saying that I have been very impressed by the conduct of this bipartisan commission.

Headed by one Republican and one Democrat, they have bent over backwards to be nonpartisan.

In a nation that treasures openness, and a nation that is not shy about exposing our problems, a very important proceeding is taking place.

Now, the President is the owner, so to speak, of the intelligence. And he can decide what intelligence he wants to share with those of us in the Congress and what he does not want to share. Consequently, the members of the Intelligence Committee, on which I serve, receive intelligence briefs – but they are not what the President receives.

We receive a series of briefs, which are available for us on a daily basis along with regular reports from key staff members. Additionally, there are often general briefings sometimes conducted by the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of State, Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Directors of the FBI and the CIA.

After you read these intelligence brief for a while, you can pick up from the text signals that are being sent from the intelligence community. And the briefs have to be read within the context of the times, you have to be aware of what else is going on.

Back in May, June, and July, and to some extent August of 2001, the intelligence chatter had never been higher.

As they said in the “Beltway,” George Tenet’s “hair was on fire,” which means he was alarmed and spreading that alarm. And, yes, in fact those alarms were made clear to those of us on the Intelligence Committee. As we read the briefs, we could sense that something was in the air.

That’s why it is difficult to understand why the brief received by the President on August 6 essentially came and went without any additional Presidential activity.

It is easy to criticize, and I do not, for a minute, believe that anybody knew who, what, where, when or how the attacks would take place. So let me set the record very straight by saying that. This President would move the earth to protect the United States.

But in my view, the August 6, 2001, Presidential Daily Brief was not just an “historical brief.” It reported that supporters of Osama bin Laden are in the country. There were reports about terrorist cells in the United States. It said that there were patterns of activity that suggested a hijacking and that Al Qaeda supporters had easy access to this country. It also mentioned 70 field investigations that were being carried out by the FBI.

This should have sounded an alarm bell. This should have focused the President. The President should have then returned to Washington, pulled together the directors of the FBI and the CIA and said I want to see reports on every one of the 70 investigations.

He should have called together his principals -- the FBI, the CIA, his cabinet, the Attorney General, the Secretaries of State, Defense and Transportation, and the head of the FAA.

He should have said, "I want to have a report by tomorrow from each and every one of you about the extent of the danger and what we can do to secure our nation."

Anybody who has ever run anything knows that the way to get the best out of people is by calling them together and holding them accountable and being specific about what you want.

And if you are the top person -- the Mayor, the Governor, the President -- you can cut through red tape and get it done. And that is what hands-on management is all about.

Now had that happened, it's easy to ask, "what if?" There were dots that could have been connected that we are now aware of.

For example:

- Two hijackers, who had come in from Malaysia, were living in San Diego, California. They should have been picked up first in Kuala Lumpur, and second, in San Diego. If intelligence had gone from the CIA to the FBI and serious efforts were made to track these individuals, they could have been picked up. But the "dots" were not connected.
- The memo written by an FBI agent on June 10 in Phoenix mentioned a series of people taking flying lessons who warranted further investigation. It was sent on a routine basis back to Washington, but did not go up the chain of command.
- There was the August 16, 2001 arrest of Zacarias Moussaoui on immigration charges. He had been attending a flight school, but didn't want to learn about landings and take-offs, only about steering a plane. That should have been a clue. The FBI should have sought a federal intelligence surveillance warrant which would have allowed them to search his computer.

Now where are we today? We have this huge, unwieldy intelligence structure that failed to cooperate before 9/11 and continues to make mistakes in its aftermath.

The Select Committee on Intelligence is now looking at all of the source information that led to the National Intelligence Estimate's finding about WMD in Iraq and we will shortly be declassifying and producing that report.

And, I believe it will show a number of vulnerabilities in the areas of intelligence collection and analysis that can lend to constructive and operational changes.

The U.S. Intelligence Community comprises more than a dozen separate agencies with individual budgets amounting to tens of billions of dollars involving everything from expensive satellite programs to human intelligence. The problem is that it remains ill-equipped to permeate Middle Eastern cultures and fanatical terrorist organizations in the world.

If I asked you who the head of the intelligence community is, you would say George Tenet. Yes, he's head of the CIA. but the fact of the matter is he does not control 80% of the intelligence budget and he does not have statutory authority over any of these other agencies.

I think we need a Director of National Intelligence, appointed by the President, who is independent, able to reallocate resources, and able to set priorities among the agencies. This idea, which I have been promoting since June 2002, was also a recommendation in last summer's report that came from the House-Senate Joint Inquiry into the 9/11 Attacks.

Right now there is a lot of competition between the agencies. People will deny that, but I believe it's there and I am hopeful that we will be able to take action to address it.

And secondly, for those of us on the Intelligence Committee — there's a lot that I cannot say -- but it's very clear that we have to refine how intelligence is collected and how it is analyzed.

And I think if we can make some major changes, we will have a much better operation in the future. None of this is easy because it's without precedent.

In the past, the work of our Intelligence Community has focused on State to State intelligence, not asymmetric non-state warfare. It was guided by a Cold War mentality which divided the world into two huge camps. You were either behind the Soviet Union or you were behind the Western world, of which the United States was the leader. Life was much simpler then.

Since the Soviet Union disappeared, you see the changes that have taken place across the world. It's a much more dangerous world.

And into this dangerous world has come this dastardly, cowardly warfare known as terrorism by people filled with hate who only know how to destroy.

I want to end on this note. As a Nation, we spend just about one percent of our budget on foreign or humanitarian assistance.

And right now, hundreds of millions of people are left out of global competition and remain stuck in the 14th or even 11th Century economically. Think of what is created by that.

I would like to see my Country begin to provide leadership in the world to reduce poverty. Poverty is a breeding ground for terrorism. If we fail to act to reduce poverty, terrorists will not only continue to endanger us, but our children and grandchildren as well.

Thank you very much.