Office of the Director of National Intelligence

# Addressing the Shortfall in Foreign Language Education to Meet National Security and Global Workforce Demands

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# Topics for Today

- Who are we and why do we care?

- Why IC language challenge?

- Current state of foreign language education

- Legislation

- Outreach and building partnerships

- Foreign language education vision

- Possible approaches to consider

- Discussion

# Creation of the ODNI after 9/11



The Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004



### *Some IC Reforms Under the 2004 IRTPA*

- DNI Represents IC as President's Intelligence Advisor
- Single IC Budgetary Authority Controlled by ODNI and Executive Committee (EXCOM)
- IC Centers Established for Transnational Issues
- Standardized and IC-wide Guidance and Policies
- Integrating Missions of Federated IC Elements

# ODNI Mission

"Our mission is to lead intelligence integration and forge an intelligence community that delivers the most insightful intelligence possible."

# U.S. Intelligence Community

- The Intelligence Community is an integrated enterprise comprising 18 agencies and organizations.

- IC elements are placed within the Executive Branch.

- Each element plays a different role in safeguarding our national security.

- Each IC member contributes through the execution of its organization's mission in accordance with statutory responsibilities.

- Agencies operate independently and collaboratively to inform the President, policymakers, and military commanders.

**Agencies**

NSA     NGA     NRO     CIA     DIA     FBI

**Departments**

DEA     DOE     DHS     STATE     TREASURY

**Services**

SPACE FORCE     COAST GUARD     AIR FORCE     NAVY     ARMY     MARINE CORPS

# U.S. Intelligence Community

- The U.S. Intelligence Community provides timely, rigorous, apolitical, and insightful intelligence and support to inform national security decisions and protect our Nation and its interests.

- Conducts actions, including covert activities, to protect against hostile activities of our adversaries.

- IC products inform the President, the National Security Council, Executive Branch, department and agency heads, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, senior military commanders, Congress, and others, as the DNI determines appropriate.

# IC Language Challenge

- [We] did not dedicate sufficient resources to the surveillance and translation needs of counterterrorism agents.

- [We] lacked sufficient translators proficient in Arabic and other key languages, resulting in a significant backlog of untranslated intercepts.

- It takes five to seven years of training, language study, and experience to bring a recruit up to full performance.

- Many who had traveled much outside the United States could expect a very long wait for initial clearance.

- Very few American colleges or universities offered programs in Middle Eastern languages or Islamic studies. The total number of undergraduate degrees granted in Arabic in all U.S. colleges and universities in 2002 was six (6).
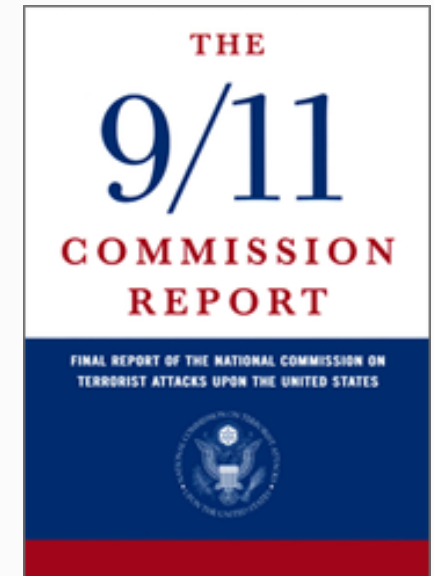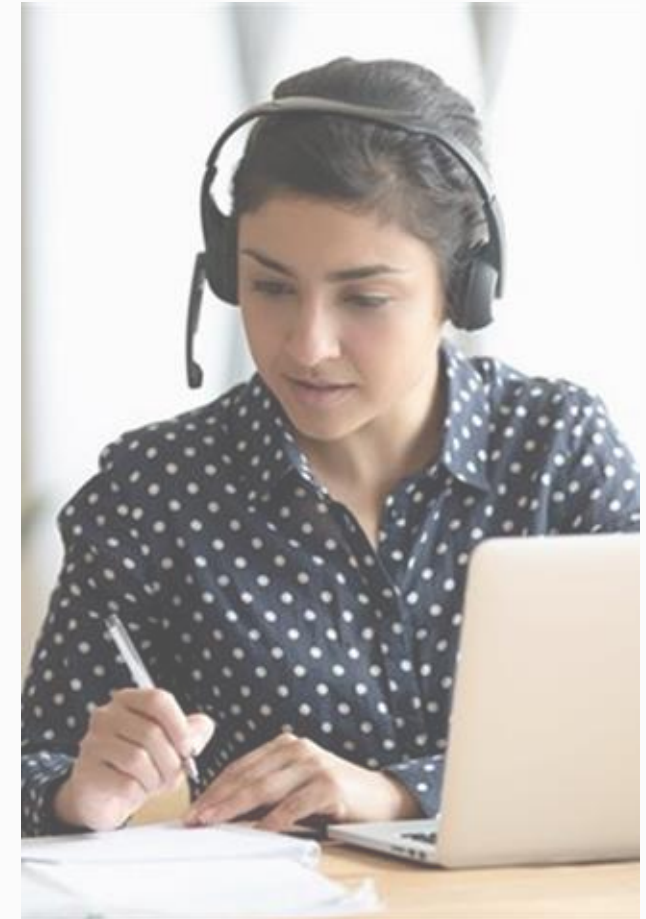
# IC Language Challenge

- In January 2024, there were almost 5 billion internet users globally and 147 zettabytes of data added daily.
- Growing complexity of IC's foreign language mission
- Need to fill more language positions
- ILR level 3 (ACTFL Superior) skills in at least one modality
- Need multidomain expertise including regional, cultural, financial, economic, scientific, military knowledge
- Human Language Technology tools & applications are not advanced enough.
- Challenges obtaining security clearance
- Decreasing numbers of individuals teaching & learning foreign languages

# Skills Needed for All Source Analyst Position

- Deep expertise needed to respond to the intelligence questions presented by the leadership.
- Formal study in field and/or in-country experience recommended.
- Often takes years of work on target to develop necessary expertise.
- Networking skills, desire to keep learning, analytical thinking, critical thinking, and writing are invaluable skills.

# Human – Machine Teaming

## Good:

- Helps discover new worlds of information.
- Helps triage information in foreign languages.

## Challenges:

- Veracity of information collected and LLM bias.
- 90% of all online content available has been produced in the last 3 years.
- Can we create enough storage and compute power to keep up?
- Explainability of Gen AI discovery.
- Less effective language processing ability on classified networks.
- Overconfidence in AI.

# What's Driving the Need for a Multilingual Workforce?

- Rapid globalization, immigration, technological advancements, and innovations

- There are 8 billion people on this planet. Only 6% speak English as a first language. 75% of people globally do not speak English at all.

- More than 350 languages are spoken in the U.S. alone.

- In the U.S., 67.3 million people (22%) under the age of 18 speak a language other than English at home.

- Our major trading partners - China, Mexico, Japan, Germany, and South Korea – are countries whose national language is not English.

- Demand for bilingual talent in major industries in the United States more than doubled over a five-year period.

- Employers are increasingly seeking workers who can speak multiple languages, especially in industries that involve a high degree of human interaction.

- The demand extends to both low-skilled and high-skilled positions.

- 25% of U.S. companies are losing business because of a lack of foreign language skills

- American businesses lose about $2 billion each year because of language or cultural misunderstandings

Everyone Speaks English (NOT)

# The Challenge in Meeting This Need

- Only 20% of K-12 students study foreign languages.

- Less than 8% of college students are taking foreign language courses.

- Only 1% of college students are majoring in a foreign language.

- 16.6% decrease in enrollment in college/university-level foreign language courses from 2016 to 2021.

- The total percentage drop between 2009 and 2021 is 29.3%.

- Many K-12 schools, colleges, and universities are dropping their foreign language programs.

- Only 11 states have a foreign language requirement to graduate from college.

- Only 23% of U.S. adults say that they know a foreign language and only 7% say they learned it in school.

# By Contrast…

- 65% of the people in the European Union speak at least two languages; 30% speak more than two.

- 86% of students in the EU are enrolled in foreign language courses.

- All K-12 students in China study English language and culture; only 0.4% of American students study Chinese.

# From STARTALK to Language Education Reimagined

STARTALK evolution

- Over 81K students and teachers between 2007-24
- 2022  - focus on high school and college students; down from 12 to 5 languages
- 2025 – only higher educational institutions; down to 2 languages
- 2026 – funding ends

How to measure
Return on Investment?

# Language Education Reimagined

(still looking for a name ...)

# Building Partnerships

- American Council for Teachers of Foreign Languages (ACTFL)

- National Council of State Supervisors for Languages (NCSSL)

- IC Centers for Academic Excellence (IC CAE)

- National Security Education Program  (NSEP)

- Big Ten Academic Alliance

- Utah State Board of Education Dual Language Immersion Office

- Institutions of Higher Education e.g., UNH, UW-Madison, UMD

- Greater Washington, DC area
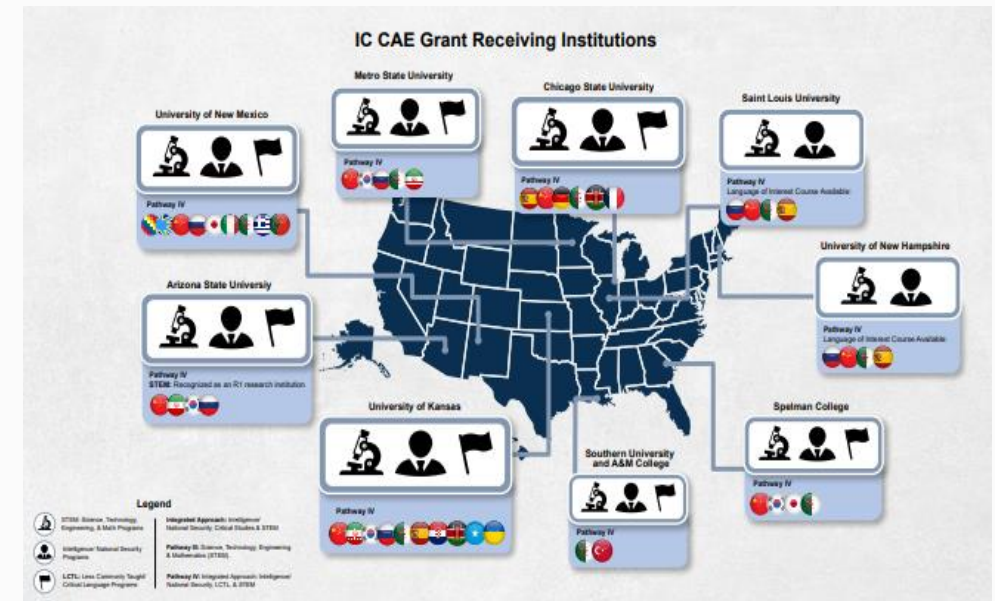
# The Foundation of the IC Engagement with K-16

Legislation:

- 1958 National Defense Education Act (NDEA)- fellowships and loans to students, and education in the areas of science, mathematics, and modern foreign languages.

- Title 50 - WAR AND NATIONAL DEFENSE, Part B - Foreign Languages Program statutes:
    - 50 USC 3202: Education partnerships
    - 50 USC 3201: Program on advancement of foreign languages critical to the intelligence community
    - 50 USC 3221: Assignment of intelligence community personnel as language students
    - 50 USC 3322: Additional education and training requirements

# Language Education Reimagined

- Focus on languages critical to U.S. strategic and economic competition.

- Goal: ILR 3/ ACTFL Superior by the time students graduate from college.

- Articulated FL program from primary to secondary to college.

- Sequential K-12 curriculum.

- Coordination at the school, district, county and state levels.

- Building on existing and/or creating new dual language immersion (DLI) programs in K-6.

- Consistent DLI teacher professional development.

- Partnerships with higher education institutions to train language teachers, help develop curricula and assessments, co-teach classes, and train future DLI teachers.

# Possible Courses of Action (COA)

1. COA 1 - Policy fixes to build on existing assets and ensure qualified teachers

2. COA 2 - Community-based approach to enhance and expand existing DLI programs

   - e.g., Academic year partnership with select schools in counties that teach our mission critical languages (Arabic, Chinese, Korean, Persian, Russian, Spanish)

3. COA 3 - In toto approach based on active engagement and support from local communities, K-12 schools, colleges and universities, to the highest leadership at the state level

# Possible Courses of Action (COA)

### COA 1 Policy fixes

- Funding for State-wide implementation of the Seal of Biliteracy

- High-school-to-college-and-career transitions by widening access to dual enrollment (DE) foreign language college courses

- Flexible foreign language teacher certification and teacher mobility

- Hiring teachers on temporary non-immigrant visas

### COA 2 Community-based approach

- Parents, school board, school administration decide to create a new DLI program or expand existing one to middle and high school

- Identify potential funding sources: state grants, federal funding

- Start with building collaboration between elementary, middle, and high schools to ensure program and curriculum articulation

- Work with state and higher ed to ensure qualified teachers

### COA 3 In toto approach

- State's commitment to expand K-12 world language and DLI programs – policy > funding

- Partnership with higher ed to bridge from HS to college

- Steering Committee to lead and oversee development implementation of programs

- Development Working Group to develop programs' components e.g., curriculum, assessments

- Evaluation Working Group – data-driven development and implementations

# Discussion

Thank you!