Intro to Intelligence – What You Need to Know

Overview:
The U.S. Intelligence Community (IC) is a network of 18 organizations that gather, analyze, and deliver information to help policymakers make informed national security decisions. This course explains how the IC works, how Congress interacts with it, and what early-career professionals need to know to be credible and effective.

Key Takeaways:
- Intelligence reduces uncertainty for policymakers—it's an input, not a directive.
- The IC operates under strict legal authorities and oversight mechanisms.
- Clearances grant eligibility, but access still requires "need to know."
- Effective engagement with the IC requires precision, trust, and discipline.

IC Structure & Coordination:
- **18 Elements** under ODNI coordination
- Civilian: CIA, NSA, NGA, FBI, etc.
- Military: DIA, service intelligence branches
- ODNI sets priorities and integrates analysis

Legal Authorities:
- **EO 12333** – Baseline authority for foreign intelligence collection
- **Title 50** – Statutory framework for national intelligence
- **Title 10** – Governs military operations
- **Section 702 (FISA)** – Targets non-U.S. persons overseas; Overseen by the FISA Court

Security & Access:
- Clearance Levels: Confidential, Secret, Top Secret
- Additional: SCI (Sensitive Compartmented Information), SAP (Special Access Programs)
- Compartmentation limits access based on mission and source protection

Congressional Oversight:
- **HPSCI & SSCI** – Primary oversight committees
- Additional roles: Armed Services, Judiciary
- Internal oversight by Inspectors General; external by PIAB

The Intelligence Cycle:
1. Requirements
2. Collection
3. Processing
4. Analysis
5. Dissemination
6. Feedback

Best Practices:
- Be precise in intelligence requests
- Handle classified information properly
- Understand probability language ("likely," "possible")
- Maintain relationships with agency liaisons
- Overreliance on intel without policy context
- Misinterpreting assessments