Lugar Diplomacy Series hosts General Michael Hayden

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Lingering questions over President Trump’s firing of FBI director James Comey and continuing controversy over Russian meddling in U.S. elections were the backdrop for an appearance by former CIA director Gen. Michael Hayden at the Lugar Diplomacy Series on June 12.

Gen. Hayden, who left the CIA in February 2009, shared his insights on the Russia hacking case and other issues with a group of more than a dozen ambassadors and senior diplomats from Europe, Asia, and the Americas. The off-the-record session gave the ambassadors the opportunity for lively give-and-take, one of the hallmarks of the Lugar Diplomacy Series programs.

Gen. Hayden, who retired from the Air Force as a four-star general in 2008, brought to the table long experience in intelligence matters. After becoming commander of the Air Intelligence Agency in 1996, Gen. Hayden in 1999 was named director of the National Security Agency, which is charged with collecting electronic intelligence. He served six years in that capacity under President Bill Clinton, and also President George Bush, who in 2005 picked him to be the principal deputy Director of National Intelligence, the office that oversees all the government intelligence agencies. The next year, in 2006, he became the Director of the CIA, where he served for three years. During his conversation with the ambassadors, Gen. Hayden emphasized he would not discuss classified information.

The Lugar Diplomacy Series was launched in October 2016, to strengthen diplomatic relationships and to promote diplomats’ engagement with leading American figures in both domestic and international affairs. The first speaker was retired four-star Gen. David Petraeus, former head of the CIA and former U.S. commander in Iraq and Afghanistan, followed by United States Supreme Court Associate Justice Elena Kagan, U.S. Senator Susan Collins of Maine, and philanthropist and global agriculture expert Howard Buffett.

Since leaving government, Gen. Hayden has served as a security consultant and as a Distinguished Visiting Professor at George Mason University. The afternoon meeting with Gen. Hayden was held at the downtown Washington offices of the Lugar Diplomacy Series co-sponsor Meridian Institute, a non-profit that brings diverse interests together to solve global problems. It was also sponsored by Abbott and DuPont.