



P R E S S R E L E A S E

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 9, 2007

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House Intelligence Committee to Hold Hearings on National Security Letters

Washington, D.C. – *The U.S. Department of Justice Inspector General released a report today on the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) use of National Security Letters. Congressman Silvestre Reyes, D-TX, Chairman of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, released the following statement in response to today's report:*

“This morning, Department of Justice Inspector General Glenn Fine briefed me on the Congressionally-mandated reviews of the use of National Security Letters (NSLs) to obtain telephone, Internet, credit and financial records, and Section 215 Orders for Business Records.

“In my opinion, these reports present a highly troubling picture of mismanagement, lack of effective controls, and shoddy recordkeeping of NSLs within the FBI. As a result, a large number of NSL requests were issued for sensitive records in violation of the law, policies and guidelines. In addition, the overall number of NSLs has been grossly underreported to Congress. Most troubling, the IG found that in more than 700 cases, the FBI issued ‘exigent letters’ promising that a grand jury subpoena or an NSL would follow – but they never did. And the IG found, in many cases, that there was no emergency or that the situation was not exigent. I expect more of the FBI and its leaders, especially since during the last Congress when we had the FBI in for hearings on this subject, we expressed our concern regarding the potential abuse of NSLs and emphasized that strict procedures be followed. Apparently, our concerns were well-founded.

“I, and many other Members of Congress, have previously expressed concern with orders issued under Section 215 of the USA Patriot Act. These orders permit investigators to demand information and records - like who borrowed a library book or who used a library Internet terminal. If not carefully handled, such information in the hands of the government has the potential to infringe upon American citizens’ privacy rights. The Inspector General's (IG) findings concern me gravely.

“These mistakes, while perhaps not intentional, must be rectified. I intend to hold briefings and hearings to understand the scope of these problems and to ensure corrective action has been taken.



“I also spoke to Attorney General Alberto Gonzales and FBI Director Robert Mueller about these reports. Both pledged to me that they would accept the IG’s recommendations and fix the problems that plague the system.

“The American people expect their government, and particularly their law enforcement agencies, to follow the law and protect their privacy and liberties. Congress must now do its job and conduct vigorous oversight of this situation.”

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