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HOUSE INTELLIGENCE COMMITTEE APPROVES FUNDING FOR INTELLIGENCE OPERATIONS AND CRITICAL OVERSIGHT

Washington, DC - *Today, the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence approved the Fiscal Year 2009 Intelligence Authorization Act (H.R. 5959), authorizing the largest funding increase in the base Intelligence Budget in history. The bill passed the Committee by voice vote and now goes to the full House for consideration.*

The Fiscal Year 2009 Intelligence Authorization Act provides policy guidance and sets classified funding levels for the 16 agencies of the Intelligence Community funded by the National Intelligence Program and the Military Intelligence Program. This year's bill contains several provisions to improve accountability, oversight, transparency, and management effectiveness.

“This bill authorizes a substantial increase in funding for critical intelligence operations, and ensures greater transparency through much-needed oversight,” said Chairman Silvestre Reyes. “This is a well-balanced bill that the President can sign into law.”

The bill adds significant resources in both the National Intelligence Program and the Military Intelligence Program to modernize signals intelligence (SIGINT) capabilities and link them into a global SIGINT Enterprise.

The Intelligence Authorization bill also adds funding to enhance Human Intelligence (HUMINT) collection. Not only does the bill add resources for HUMINT collection against terrorists, it also provides much-needed funds for other enduring and emerging global security issues, such as challenges faced in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

The bill mandates implementation of security clearance reform, to allow first- and second-generation Americans – who may have critical language skills – to serve in the Intelligence Community with proper clearances.

Two provisions of H.R. 5959 will enhance reporting to the full Intelligence Committee on intelligence

activities. First, the bill would make certain portions of the covert action budget contingent upon full reporting by intelligence agencies to the whole Committee, on all active covert action operations. Another provision gives the Committee control over Presidential attempts to limit information to only the Chairman and Ranking Member, and clarifies what must be reported to the full Committee.

The bill requires a new National Intelligence Estimate on Syria's WMD programs, and requires periodic updates to the Committee on Iran, Syria, and North Korea's WMD programs.

The Administration's request for fiscal year 2009 included a sizeable request for funding for the Comprehensive National Cybersecurity Initiative. The Committee performed an extensive review of this request, working closely with other Committees of the House, holding three hearings and numerous briefings and roundtables.

The bill authorizes much of the request for foundational Cybersecurity activities, while expressing the Committee's concern about potential policy and governance issues.

The bill includes a legislative provision requesting a Presidential report on creating a senior advisory panel comprised of representatives of the executive branch, legislative branch and private sector to provide a vehicle for addressing policy and procedural issues.

Despite the size of the Administration's request, it did not include adequate funds for Research and Development to keep the U.S. Intelligence Community competitive in advanced technologies. The bill adds funds to four Intelligence Community agencies for that purpose, and urges the Administration to sustain and increase this level of funding.

The bill continues the Committee's long-standing commitment to improving language capabilities in the Intelligence Community, adding both funds and reporting requirements to improve oversight of this perennial problem area.

The bill invests a small, but important, amount of funding to understand the impact of climate change on national and energy security – an issue that has been identified by military and intelligence experts as vital to global security.

The Committee also adopted an amendment offered by Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky to prohibit CIA's use of contractors for the purposes of interrogating detainees, in addition to three Republican amendments requiring reports to the Committee on FBI transformation, a study on the feasibility of denying pensions to individuals who leak classified information, and a clarification that no funds should be diverted from human intelligence collection against al Qaeda.