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## **Reyes Statement on Congressional Notification Reform**

**WASHINGTON** (May 14) – *Chairman of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence Silvestre Reyes of Texas today issued the following statement regarding recent issues related to congressional notification on sensitive intelligence programs:*

“Ever since President Obama released the Bush-era torture memos, a number of sources, named and unnamed, have been trying to absolve themselves of any responsibility by claiming that they received congressional approval for harsh interrogation tactics. This has devolved into a back and forth over who was told what and when, rather than a serious discussion about what our national security policies should be. It is nothing more than a political distraction. The Republicans have had fun playing politics with this issue, and I am sad to see that some in the press have been obliging them.

“Many of those offering their opinions on this subject seem to think that, once the so-called ‘Gang of Eight’ has been notified about a CIA program, Congress has somehow given its approval or authorization for that program. Nothing could be further from the truth.

“When the CIA came to notify now-Speaker Pelosi about interrogation, they didn’t come seeking her approval. They didn’t even come seeking her opinion. They came to tell her about a policy that they had already approved and, according to CIA documents, was already being employed. The Office of Legal Counsel approved the use of harsh interrogation techniques on August 1, 2002. The first congressional notifications didn’t take place until September 2002, after water boarding had already begun. The Speaker did not know that the notice to her was inaccurate and incomplete.

“Moreover, it is ridiculous to argue that the Speaker, who was then the Ranking Minority Member of the Intelligence Committee, could have prevented President Bush from carrying out this policy. Let’s not forget the tactics the Bush Administration employed on Congress. They tried to cut us out of everything. In 2002, Democrats were in the Minority, and the Bush Administration didn’t care what we thought.

“These are notifications – nothing more. As Chairman of the Intelligence Committee, I have been in on a number of these sessions. When the CIA comes in to notify you about a very sensitive intelligence program, you don’t have the opportunity to get all your questions answered or to review legal documents. You’re not allowed to consult with any lawyers or experts. You’re not even allowed to discuss the matter with your colleagues or with your staff.

“When President Obama signed an executive order bringing this Bush-Cheney policy to an end, he stated that ‘I prohibited the use of these interrogation techniques by the United States because they undermine our moral authority and do not make us safer.’ The Speaker has asked us to use this historic opportunity to take the high road and work on making our national security oversight more effective. That is precisely what we’re going to do. We’ll leave the mudslinging to the other side and work on moving forward with reforms that empower Congress to conduct more effective oversight.

“In the coming weeks, I will be working with committee members to advance legislation to modify the *National Security Act of 1947*. Our intent is to prevent future abuse of the ‘Gang of Eight’ process, to require that the President provide the intelligence committees any relevant legal documents, and to ensure that the voice of all intelligence committee members can be heard on important matters of national security.”