



House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence

Congressman Silvestre Reyes, Chairman

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Opening Statement of Chairman Silvestre Reyes at the Joint Intelligence / Armed Services Hearing on the NIE Regarding Al Qaeda

Washington, D.C. – *Congressman Silvestre Reyes, D-TX, Chairman of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, delivered the following statement today at the Joint House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence / House Armed Services Committee hearing on the implications of the National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) regarding Al Qaeda:*

“Good afternoon. As Chairman of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, I am pleased at this opportunity to conduct our work in open session, and to convene a hearing with my colleagues on the House Armed Services Committee. Especially since I also serve as a member of the Armed Services Committee, I know how closely our committees work together to safeguard our nation and empower our military and intelligence professionals. When focusing on an issue as important as Al Qaeda, which is the topic of today’s hearing, it is critical that our committees work together closely. I thank my good friend and colleague Ike Skelton, the Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, for his leadership and partnership, as well as our two Ranking Members, Mr. Hunter and Mr. Hoekstra.

“Today, we will specifically focus on the resurgence of Al Qaeda as reflected in the July 2007 National Intelligence Estimate ‘The Terrorist Threat to the US Homeland.’ I would like to thank our witnesses for joining us here today. Your testimony will help our committees work together to examine this critical issue. Our efforts to defeat Al Qaeda and protect our nation are not separate intelligence or military issues. In order to defeat this most urgent threat, all instruments of national power must work together seamlessly. This joint hearing reflects that approach.

“Four years ago, President Bush told the American people that Al Qaeda was ‘on the run’ and that ‘they’re not a problem anymore.’ However, the NIE released earlier this month indicates that today, our Intelligence Community believes otherwise. The NIE states that the U.S. homeland will face a ‘persistent

and evolving terrorist threat over the next three years,' and that Al Qaeda has 'regenerated key elements of its Homeland attack capability.'

“Essentially, the NIE reflects that Al Qaeda is not just a problem, but the most serious threat to our nation’s security. This is a grave issue, and it is critical that Congress know how our country can protect itself and ensure this does not happen again.

“One of our main challenges is that, while the Bush Administration assumed Al Qaeda was no longer a threat, the Administration has focused our resources in Iraq. This war, which costs the American people approximately \$10 billion a month, has diverted needed funds and personnel from eliminating the threat of Al Qaeda. The NIE, however, points out that the Al Qaeda threat emanates from Afghanistan and Pakistan, not Iraq. And the United States has missed critical opportunities to address that threat.

“Moreover, there are signs that the War in Iraq has had an even greater negative impact. It appears that our presence in Iraq may actually be helping Al Qaeda. As the 2006 National Intelligence Estimate on terrorism noted, the War in Iraq has become a recruiting tool and training ground for terrorists. And, as the new NIE assesses, Al Qaeda’s association with ‘Al Qaeda in Iraq’ helps Al Qaeda raise funds and recruit operatives, including for attacks against the United States.

“These are critically important issues to the American public, and I look forward to a productive hearing today that will not only tell us more about the threat laid out in the NIE, but how we can best fight this threat more effectively. The men and women of the U.S. intelligence community, the men and women of the U.S. armed forces, and the American public as a whole, deserve this careful consideration.

“Finally, as I have consistently noted since assuming the Chairmanship of the House Intelligence Committee, the threat of terrorism is not a political issue. There is no room for partisan politics in the realm of national security. I look forward to working with all of my colleagues, both Republicans and Democrats, to further safeguard our nation. And, as always, I invite them all to work with me.

“Thank you all again for joining us today, and thank you to the Members of our respective committees who are here as well.”