



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE –September 9, 2008

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REYES STATEMENT ON U.S INTELLIGENCE OPERATIONS AND AL QAEDA

Washington, DC - *House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence Chairman, Silvestre Reyes (D-TX), today released the following statement after convening a full Committee hearing on U.S. intelligence operations and al Qaeda:*

“As we approach the anniversary of 9/11, I remain deeply concerned that Americans today are as vulnerable to terrorism as we were seven years ago. Yesterday’s 90 minute al Qaeda videotape demonstrates that the terrorist organization remains determined to attack America and our allies.

“The war in Iraq has caused us to divert precious intelligence and military resources away from the fight against al Qaeda.

“For most of 2008, Pakistan and Afghanistan have been in a state of chaos, with deadly consequences for our American service members. The growing instability in these regions has serious implications for U.S. national security and increases the risk of a future attack on our soil.

“Our Intelligence Community has confirmed publicly that al Qaeda has rebuilt its safe haven in western Pakistan. Senior al Qaeda leaders are planning attacks on our homeland. The security situation in Afghanistan continues to deteriorate. Yet, most of our troops and most of our intelligence assets are nowhere near Afghanistan. They are bogged down in Iraq.

“Our brave troops and intelligence professionals – and their families – deserve credit for the great sacrifices they have made to safeguard our nation. They serve heroically and have earned the gratitude and admiration of every American. But, the Bush Administration has let them down repeatedly – with poor equipment, insufficient body armor, and inadequate resources. Many of our intelligence officers joined up after 9/11, determined to go after the people who attacked us. Instead, they were sent to Iraq on a mission without end.

“Today, the House Intelligence Committee held a classified hearing on the al Qaeda threat along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. The hearing provided the most up-to-date information on the whereabouts of al Qaeda senior leaders, as well as what our nation is doing to combat the threat.

“The first job of the Intelligence Community is to warn us. Today, we were warned. Seven years after 9/11, the question for President Bush and Vice President Cheney is: will you listen?”