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Intelligence Authorization Bill provides for intelligence personnel, enhances oversight

Washington, D.C. – Chairman Silvestre Reyes, D-TX, convened a committee meeting today in the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence to mark-up H.R. 2082, the fiscal year 2008 Intelligence Authorization Act.

H.R. 2082:

- *makes new investments in Human Intelligence training and adds funds for sending analysts overseas;*
- *enhances oversight, eliminates wasteful spending, and requires additional information where it is necessary;*
- *requests quarterly intelligence updates on Iran and North Korea's nuclear programs;*
- *asks for reports on the use of contractors in the intelligence community;*
- *requires the creation of a multi-level security clearance system and requires the Director of National Intelligence to develop a strategic plan to increase diversity; and*
- *addresses the global climate crisis and requests a new estimate on how this crisis may affect America's national security.*

Chairman Reyes released the following statement regarding the hearing:

“This legislation authorizes intelligence funding for all U.S. intelligence agencies, including our military intelligence organizations.

“In past years, this Committee has complained about its inability to review so-called Emergency Supplemental funding bills put forward by the Executive Branch outside of the normal budget process.

“This year, we are doing things differently. Today, we will be marking up the FY2008 base budget for intelligence, but also the FY2008 supplemental request for intelligence activities related to terrorism and Iraq. We are bringing an unprecedented level of oversight to the supplemental request – and as Members will see, we are in fact, shifting a large amount of money from the supplemental into the base budget.

“This is, in my view, responsible budgeting – because it allows intelligence officers in the field to plan their operations properly, particularly in the counterterrorism arena.

“Let me quickly note a few features of this bill.

“First, we considered the single largest intelligence authorization bill ever written by the Committee – evidence of how important intelligence has become to our national security.

“Every aspect of national security – from stopping WMD, to locating terror cells, to helping the warfighters in Iraq and Afghanistan, to dealing with over-the-horizon challenges posed by Iran, North Korea, North Africa, Russia, China, and Latin America – requires stronger, better intelligence.

“And this Committee must ensure that intelligence is collected, analyzed, and disseminated in accordance with our laws, policies, and values as a nation.

“Many of us have traveled the world to see our brave intelligence collectors and analysts in the field. This budget helps them do their job. It provides them with resources to focus on the most dangerous threats facing our country.

“We add funds to both CIA and military elements for Human Intelligence (HUMINT) training. We invest in language training for collectors and analysts and in language translation capabilities. We add funding for sending additional analysts overseas. We strengthen Counterintelligence field operations.

“We streamline acquisition. And we make some tough choices about some big-ticket technical programs, to help ensure that the U.S. will maintain its technological edge, particularly in space, and will remain able to support the full range of customers depending upon space assets.

“But with these additional resources, we also enhance oversight, eliminating wasteful spending and requiring additional information where more is necessary.

“Part of the wish-list for the Administration’s Iraq supplemental funding bill will be trimmed back – because as we evaluated some of the programs, we thought that the money was being wasted with no real strategy or metrics for evaluating its effectiveness. Some of that money will be shifted to other global challenges – such as Russia, Iran, Asia – where we must not lose focus.

“We direct that managers of a major human intelligence initiative provide a stronger strategy before spending all of the money requested.

“We ask for quarterly intelligence updates on Iran and North Korea’s nuclear programs – so that Congress has the most up-to-date intelligence on these areas of concern. We ask for a comprehensive list of all special access programs. And we require the CIA Inspector General to conduct an audit of covert activities once every three years.

“We ask for reports on the use of contractors in the intelligence community (IC).

“We require the creation of a multi-level security clearance system – to allow patriotic Americans who because of foreign ties cannot get SCI clearances to serve as translators or linguists in the IC.

“And we also tackle a new issue for the IC – the global climate crisis. We will heed the advice of several former military commanders and ask for a new estimate on how the global climate crisis may affect America’s national security.

“These provisions, and many others, will enhance the intelligence community and provide more effective oversight.

“This is the first time in many years that Democrats have led this process. We have approached this in a bipartisan way – and put the national security interests of our nation first.

“For the past two years, Congress has failed to produce an intelligence authorization bill – through no fault of anyone here. I want to urge my colleagues to work together to report out a bill that can be passed by the full House, passed by the Senate, and signed by the President. The intelligence community is counting on us.”