

## **Opening Statement of Chairman Silvestre Reyes (D-TX) House Intelligence Committee Annual Threat Assessment Hearing**

“Good morning. The committee will come to order. When I convened the 2007 Annual Threat Assessment Hearing, my first public hearing as Chairman of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, I noted the formidable threats and challenges facing our great nation.

“I am very proud of the work of our nation’s intelligence services. Our country’s intelligence professionals have made significant strides, but so much work remains to be done. And our committee’s oversight will strengthen the work of U.S. intelligence, and it will ensure that this vital function of government is guided by integrity and our nation’s values.

“I am also proud of this committee. We have worked to address the national security challenges facing our country. We passed a comprehensive Intelligence Authorization Bill for 2008. We developed a comprehensive solution to FISA. And we now look forward to a very productive second session.

“We continue to face enemies and adversaries who know no boundaries. Our brave men and women continue to face these enemies valiantly in Iraq and Afghanistan, with no end in sight. Our troops work diligently to train a capable Iraqi security force, but their successes have been marginalized by political infighting and stalemates. And without political progress in Iraq, security improvements will be fleeting and mean little.

“Global terrorist networks continue to threaten the U.S and its allies. Al Qaeda has strengthened its position in the Pakistani tribal areas, where it has entrenched itself in a safe haven that provides it freedom to recruit, train, and plot new attacks. New threats constantly emerge as well, such as the expanding Al Qaeda network in North Africa.

“Our country’s allies in counterterrorism efforts face their own internal challenges. We can look to the deteriorating situation in Pakistan, where President Musharraf’s increasingly weak hold on power has led to repeated political crises, and where \$10 billion of U.S. counterterrorism assistance and international efforts have fallen short of defeating the Taliban, Al Qaeda, or other extremists.

“President Lyndon Johnson once said, “Our purpose ... is to prevent the success of aggression.” He was speaking of the Vietnam War, but today we are fighting a different form of aggression. And our collective purpose today is to ensure that this aggression against U.S.

national security does not succeed. How will we do this? What tools and resources are needed to ensure victory?

“To help us answer these questions, today we have invited the Director of National Intelligence, the Honorable Michael McConnell, as well as the leaders of our major intelligence organizations – General Michael Hayden, Director of the Central Intelligence Agency; Lieutenant General Michael Maples, Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency; the Honorable Robert Mueller, Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation; the Honorable Randall Fort, Assistant Secretary of State for Intelligence and Research; and Mr. Charlie Allen, Chief Intelligence Officer for the Department of Homeland Security.

“Gentlemen, as I said earlier, together we have achieved many of the goals we had for the first session. We worked closely with our partners in the intelligence community to ensure that the needs they identified were being met, and that those men and women combating terrorism and threats to our national security had exactly what they needed to be successful.

“I am eager for our witnesses today to share their views about prospects for progress in Iraq and Afghanistan, on both the military and political fronts.

“We must understand the threats posed by state actors such as Iran and North Korea. As we all know, last year’s National Intelligence Estimate on Iran’s nuclear weapons intentions and activities contradicted much of what we had heard thus far. We were previously led to believe that Iran was building a nuclear arsenal in defiance of the world community and that Iran’s nuclear ambitions posed an imminent threat to the United States and our allies. The intelligence community has now concluded that Iran’s work on a nuclear weapon was halted in 2003. Does the intelligence community still believe Iran is a critical, imminent, threat to us?

“On the Korean Peninsula, there are also many questions. Through the Six-Party Talks, we seemed to reach an agreement for the North to dismantle its nuclear program, but the implementation appears to have stalled. Are we on track to rein in North Korea’s nuclear program? And will the decision to engage North Korea, rather than continue to isolate it, prove to be successful?

“Russian President Vladimir Putin, now positioning himself to be the next prime minister, has embarked upon an aggressive foreign policy, financed in part by surging oil revenues, in which Russia will undercut potential adversaries at home and abroad. Putin’s assertiveness appears to be aimed at the United States and the European Union as well. We need to further our understanding of the implications of this development.

“Of course Al Qaeda and its allies continue to challenge the United States and our way of life by engaging in an ever expanding campaign of terror. Its network keeps on evolving and growing, so we must remain vigilant and persistent in countering this threat. Does the intelligence community still gauge Al Qaeda as the greatest threat to the U.S. homeland? What

about the rise of Islamic extremism within our borders - the so-called “homegrown” terrorists? The committee wishes to know more about these threats and what we can do to stop them.

“I would also like the intelligence community to remain focused on areas that have long been neglected: Latin America and Africa. We previously believed the threats to be less urgent, but they have the potential to seriously threaten core U.S. national security interests, and will continue to grow in scope and capability. The security of the United States is directly affected by events in these places.

- Colombia’s long-term efforts to bring terrorism and narco-trafficking under control have generated real dividends, yet Colombia continues to be the primary source of cocaine entering the United States.
- In Cuba and Venezuela, from Fidel Castro’s leadership, for however much longer that may be, to the growing global involvement of Hugo Chavez, whether harboring terrorist, or partnering with terrorist states, are additional examples of why we must continue to monitor this region of the world.
- Corruption and the uneven distribution of oil wealth crushes the aspirations of 135 million Nigerians to free themselves from poverty – but the violence it has generated also keeps that country’s petroleum from reaching the market, thereby keeping world oil prices high.
- Corruption, cronyism, and failed democratization in Kenya, once viewed as one of the most stable countries in Africa, will lead to instability in all of the countries of east Africa, but it will also reduce cooperation from a key regional partner on counterterrorism and regional security.

Other issues I hope you will address include:

- The challenges we face from the ongoing conflicts in the Middle East;
- The increasing counterintelligence threat from China, Russia, and other countries, and what we are doing to mitigate this risk;
- The growing cyber threat to critical infrastructure, and the Administration’s recently announced plan to combat it;
- The status of the intelligence community’s ability to address the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction;
- The lack of qualified linguists needed in the Intelligence Community to counter these threats, and the challenges we face in building a diverse intelligence community;
- The expanding role of FBI in addressing counterterrorism and other global challenges; and
- The DNI’s efforts to coordinate the intelligence community’s efforts to improve information-sharing among federal, state, and local agencies.

“Finally, I want to remind our Members and witnesses that we are in open session this morning. If there is doubt about the classification of a particular subject or statement, reserve those issues for the closed session that will follow after this open hearing.

“I look forward to a productive hearing and a productive Congress, and now I’d like to recognize our Ranking Member Mr. Hoekstra, for any opening statement he might have.”