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Statement of Rep. Henry A. Waxman Chairman, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform Subpoena for Testimony of Secretary State Condoleezza Rice April 25, 2007

We now turn to consideration of a subpoena to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. The Committee seeks the Secretary's testimony on several matters, including key unanswered questions about her role in the Administration's use of the fabricated claim that Iraq sought uranium in Niger, as well as other issues.

I am disappointed that the Secretary has put the Committee in this position. I had hoped that the Secretary would be willing to voluntarily appear before the Committee. But she has refused. And we have reached this point only after the Committee's many attempts to obtain information from the Secretary have failed.

I'd like to spend a few minutes talking about Dr. Rice's role and statements regarding the claim the Administration made that Iraq sought uranium in Niger.

The Administration's claim that Iraq could pose a nuclear threat was at the center of its case for war. Indeed, this assertion was key to the decision of many members of Congress, including myself, to support the resolution authorizing the use of force in Iraq.

It therefore raised enormously serious questions when Congress and the public learned that there were serious flaws with the intelligence underpinning the Administration's nuclear case.

On January 28, 2003, the President said his famous "16 words," claiming in the State of the Union, the most heavily vetted speech a president makes, that Iraq sought uranium from Africa.

Yet three months later, U.N. inspectors announced that the support for that claim — purported letters between Iraq and Niger — were nothing but crude forgeries.

By June, Condoleezza Rice had taken to the airwaves to defend the White House and cast blame on the intelligence community. Appearing on multiple national news shows, she claimed that "the intelligence community did not know at that time, or at levels that got to us, that this, that there were serious questions about that report."

This statement was false. In October 2002, the CIA sent two memos to the White House warning against using the Niger claims. One of those memos was addressed directly to Secretary Rice. Both were addressed to her top deputy, Stephen Hadley. And to reinforce the points in the memo, the director of the CIA called Mr. Hadley personally to ask him to remove the claim from a speech the President was giving in Cincinnati.

Ms. Rice's statement also contradicted the National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) issued in October 2002. The NIE is the document that Secretary Rice cites repeatedly to justify her position. But the NIE states explicitly that the State Department — the Department Secretary Rice now runs — found the claims "highly dubious." The State Department doubts about Iraq's nuclear capabilities were not buried in the NIE. The "Key Judgments" section of the NIE contains a detailed discussion of the State Department's "Alternative View of Iraq's Nuclear Program."

In the past four years, I have written multiple letters to Secretary Rice to learn more about the fabricated Niger claim. The first reply I ever received was last month.

Since then, I have received two additional letters. The gist of the letters is that the Secretary either didn't know about the forged evidence or forgot what she knew. Her staff has also suggested that the Secretary is too busy to answer these questions.

The claim about Iraq's nuclear capability was the centerpiece of the Administration's case for war. It led to a war in which thousands of American men and women have lost their lives or been severely injured. Congress and the American public deserves a better explanation than "I forgot" or "I didn't read the memo."

The Republicans on this Committee had four years to investigate the misleading intelligence that got us into the war in Iraq. But they didn't hold one hearing. They didn't issue one subpoena. And they didn't even ask a single question.

We will hear today that there have already been several investigations into why the intelligence about Iraq was so wrong. There have been some investigations. But they all looked at the mistakes made by the intelligence agencies. There has been no inquiry about what went wrong inside the White House.

There was one person in the White House who had the primary responsibility to get the intelligence about Iraq right: and that was Secretary Rice, who was President Bush's National Security Advisor. She has never testified in public about what she may know about how the intelligence was used — or misused — by the White House. That is all we are asking her to do.

The days of averting our eyes from the hard questions are over. The American public was misled about the threat posed by Iraq. And this Committee is going to do its part to find out why.

I urge Members to support the motion.