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Statement by Chairman Reyes on Destruction of Syrian Nuclear Facility

Washington, D.C. – *Congressman Silvestre Reyes, D-TX, Chairman of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, released the following statement today following the Bush Administration’s public disclosure of a covert nuclear facility in Syria:*

“Today the full House Intelligence Committee was briefed on the construction of a covert nuclear facility in Syria, and its destruction in September 2007. For eight months, I have been pressing the Bush Administration to inform the full membership of the House Intelligence Committee about these developments, which significantly impact U.S. foreign policy regarding the Middle East and North Korea.

“Eight months later, and just six hours before releasing this information to the media, the President finally sent briefers to our committee. This is inexcusable, and it violates the National Security Act, which requires that the Administration keep Congress ‘fully and currently informed of all intelligence activities.’

“Without information, Congress cannot make informed judgments about the threats facing America. The President asks Congress to authorize billions of dollars to maintain 140,000 troops in Iraq. He demands changes to surveillance laws. He asks that we fund interrogation and detention programs. All of these programs are justified based on the ‘threat.’ Yet, he does not even discuss with Congress the true nature of the threat.

“Syria’s pursuit of a nuclear program – with North Korea’s help – is evidence of the growing dangers posed by weapons of mass destruction in the hands of state sponsors of terrorism. Nuclear weapons in the hands of the Assad regime would present a clear and present danger not just to Israel, but to the region, and the entire world. The regime in Damascus actively supports Hezbollah and harbors the leadership of Hamas. Syria has allowed foreign fighters to flow into Iraq to attack U.S. troops. Syrian officials also were likely responsible for the assassination of Rafik Hariri and other reform-minded Lebanese political figures.

“The world is more dangerous today than at any time since 9/11. There are serious challenges to U.S. national security and world security that require the Administration and Congress to work together. But I fear that the Administration’s overzealous secrecy and disdain for Congress make it more difficult to meet these challenges and keep America secure.”