

Bill Includes Holt Provision on Gulf War Syndrome

(Washington, D.C.) – U.S. Representative Rush Holt (NJ-12) - Chair of the Select Intelligence Oversight Panel and a member of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence – tonight supported the annual Intelligence Authorization bill, which includes new oversight measures designed to curb potential Presidential abuses of power. The bill passed in the House by a vote of 244-181.

“I’m pleased that the Congress is sending this bill to the President for his signature,” Holt said. “Congress now will have additional tools for monitoring the Administration’s use of covert action programs, the Intelligence Community will have an Inspector General for the first time, and our foreign language training programs will be strengthened. These and other provisions will improve oversight of our intelligence operations and thus enhance our national security.”

Included in the bill is the creation of an Inspector General for the intelligence community, a requirement that the Director of National Intelligence providing the General Accounting Office access to information in possession of the intelligence community, and the establishment of a commission tasked with analyzing how best to integrate information from outside of the intelligence community, such as information collected by the State Department. The bill also expands foreign language education programs.

Additionally, the bill makes changes to intelligence notification and oversight. Holt supports changes requiring written notification to all members of the intelligence committees. However, Holt remains concerned that the bill still allows the President to withhold information on covert action programs from most of the Intelligence Committee for up to six months, and potentially indefinitely if he alone asserts a need to do so.

Said Holt: “Passing this bill is a step forward. It does not mark the end of our effort to reform Congressional oversight and accountability of intelligence activities.”

Holt also secured language in the bill directing the Director of the CIA to conduct a classification review of CIA records that may be relevant to helping veterans, scientists, and medical providers better understand the scope of potential toxic exposures among Operation Desert Storm veterans.

“Ill Gulf War veterans have been waiting for nearly two decades for our government to make public any information in its possession about the kinds of toxic agents they may have been exposed to during and immediately after the 1991 war,” Holt said. “This mandated

declassification review is a long overdue step towards meeting that goal.”

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