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Contact: Jamal D. Ware
(202) 225-4121

Intelligence Chairs Call for Declassification of Documents Seized in Global War on Terrorism

WASHINGTON, D.C. – House Intelligence Chairman Pete Hoekstra, R-Mich., today called on the administration to declassify millions of pages of documents captured during the global war on terrorism to enable their analysis by the public.

“The reality is there is no way the U.S. government can possibly translate and assess all the documents it has obtained in the global war on terrorism,” Hoekstra said. “I would like to get these documents into the public domain in hopes that academics, journalists, bloggers and other interested people can help clear this backlog. In the end, I think the government, and the public, will benefit from having all these documents translated.”

In a letter to the Office of the Director of National Intelligence signed by Hoekstra and Senate Intelligence Chairman Pat Roberts, R-Kan., they request a process be developed to release the documents publicly. They ask that the process ensure document integrity and protection of sources and methods as well as involve our allies, who are in control of some of the documents.

Hoekstra said he would like to see the documents posted online, where people would be able to access copies and offer translations and interpretations of the material. He envisions it working like Wikipedia or open-source code on the Internet, where people are able to take original information and review and analyze it. In much the same way, he said the government could then draw from the public review to determine which documents contained important information and which were trivial.

Hoekstra said he became concerned about this issue when he learned that tens-of-thousands of documents dating back to Operation Desert Storm still had not been translated.

“From the collective effort of people across the world, we can learn what is in these documents and gain insight into the thinking of Saddam and his government,” Hoekstra said. “I believe this is a far better plan than the continued slow translation of documents, which may leave many of these documents unread for decades.”