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Hoekstra Statement on DOCEX

“Yesterday’s article by the New York Times highlights a number of important issues with respect to Iraq’s WMD programs, as well as the importance of the documents that have been recovered in Iraq,” said U.S. Rep. Pete Hoekstra (R-MI), Chairman of the House Intelligence Committee. “I am pleased that the document release program continues to stimulate public discussion of these issues.

“With respect to the possibility that documents may have been released that should not have been released, I have always been clear that the Director of National Intelligence should take whatever steps necessary to withhold sensitive documents. In fact, as of today the DNI had withheld 59 percent of the documents that it had reviewed, and has become more risk-averse over time. If the DNI believes that the documents that were released were in the safe 40 percent, imagine what the 60 percent being withheld must contain.

“That said, it is also important to emphasize that the IAEA, contrary to its assertions, never raised any concerns about this material with the United States Government before going to the press. Similarly, the DNI’s office has informed me that no agency of the U.S. Government had raised any issues about the potential or actual release of these documents before yesterday. If there were such problems, they would have been better addressed through the appropriate channels rather than the press.

“These documents also raise several additional issues of interest. First, it is extraordinary that the New York Times now acknowledges that the captured documents demonstrate that ‘[Saddam] Hussein’s scientists were on the verge of building an atom bomb, as little as a year away.’ This only reinforces the value of these documents in understanding the threat posed by Saddam Hussein’s regime. Only 1 percent of the estimated 120 million pages of captured documents have been reviewed, and we must continue working to promptly understand these materials. If there is concern about Saddam’s nuclear program, there should be similar concern about potential connections between Saddam and al-Qaeda suggested in the documents.

“Second, my staff’s preliminary review of the documents in question suggests that at least some of them may be internal IAEA documents. There is a serious question of why and how the Iraqis obtained these documents in the first place. We need to explore that carefully – I certainly hope there will be no evidence that the IAEA had been penetrated by Saddam’s regime.

“Finally, it is disappointing but not surprising that the New York Times would continue to participate in such blatant and transparent political ploys, including what I believe are improper efforts by the IAEA to interfere with U.S. domestic affairs. The sad reality is that the New York Times has done far more damage to U.S. national security by the disclosure of vital, classified, intelligence programs than

is likely to be caused by the inadvertent disclosure of decades-old information that had already been in the hands of Saddam's regime.”