

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

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SENIOR DEMOCRATIC MEMBERS REJECT BUSH PLOY TO RELEASE SUPERFICIAL COUNTERTERRORISM PLAN BEFORE MIDTERM ELECTIONS

WASHINGTON, DC — Today senior Democratic members of Congress wrote to President Bush objecting to the Administration's ploy to roll out a superficial counterterrorism plan directly before the midterm elections.

The letter was sent to President Bush by Rep. Henry A. Waxman, ranking member of the Committee on Government Reform; Rep. Tom Lantos, ranking member of the Committee on International Relations; Rep. Ike Skelton, ranking member of the Committee on Armed Services; Rep. Jane Harman, ranking member of the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence; Rep. John Conyers, ranking member of the Committee on the Judiciary; and Rep. Bennie G. Thompson, ranking member of the Committee on Homeland Security.

The text of the letter follows:

October 25, 2006

The President
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

A year ago, you released a "National Strategy for Victory in Iraq," which you touted as "comprehensive," "clear," "flexible," and "dynamic."¹ The release of the strategy, which you combined with a major speech at the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, received front-page coverage across the nation.

The strategy emphasized how well efforts in Iraq were going, proclaiming repeatedly that "our strategy is working," but it contained few details about how our troops would counter the growing violence in Iraq. In essence, the strategy was a public relations document. Experts criticized the plan for being short on detail and ignoring realities on the ground. As the nonpartisan Government Accountability Office concluded, "without detailed information on

¹ President George W. Bush, *President Outlines Strategy for Victory in Iraq*, U.S. Naval Academy (Nov. 30, 2005).

costs and roles and responsibilities, the strategy does not provide Congress with a clear road map for achieving victory in Iraq.”²

It now appears that your Administration is poised to repeat this approach by releasing a superficial “National Implementation Plan” for the war on terrorism. We understand that you approved the National Implementation Plan on June 26, 2006, but that your Administration has delayed the official public announcement of the plan.³ We further understand that such a “rollout” of this plan may be imminent, just days before the mid-term 2006 election, despite the fact that the Administration has refused to provide the Plan to Congress.

We have multiple concerns about this strategy. Since June, when you approved the Plan, the world has changed. Violence in Iraq has skyrocketed, and the nation has learned that the National Intelligence Council believes the insurgency in Iraq is breeding more terrorists. Hezbollah has shown its determination and capacity to launch a barrage of rockets. The nuclear terrorism threat has increased, as North Korea’s recent nuclear test and Iran’s refusal to end its nuclear weapons research raise the risks that fissile material — or even complete nuclear weapons — could be provided to a terrorist organization. The criticality of these events to national security and to terrorist threats in particular makes it important that the risks they pose be taken into account. Members of Congress must also be able to review in detail the Plan and determine whether its premises adequately account for changes in crises.

Since 2001, bipartisan congressional committees, the nonpartisan Government Accountability Office, and the respected 9/11 Commission have been calling for an effective government-wide plan for countering global terrorism. These experts have recommended three essential components for coherent counterterrorism planning: (1) identifying priorities; (2) linking these priorities to the budget; and (3) measuring results.

Unfortunately, based on initial reports, the National Implementation Plan does not appear likely to meet these standards. We are concerned that the National Implementation Plan, like last year’s National Strategy for Victory in Iraq, may be largely window dressing that masks how little progress our nation is actually making in the war on terrorism. A document that merely compiles what federal agencies are already doing would not be a true plan that ranks terrorism threats, prioritizes responses, coordinates spending, and measures results.

We ask that you reconsider your approach. The public is looking for less spin and more candor from your Administration about federal efforts to stop terrorism. And the nation urgently needs an actual plan for unifying our efforts to fight terrorism, not another public relations gambit.

We also ask that you provide Congress with a copy of the classified National Implementation Plan you signed in June.

² U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Rebuilding Iraq: More Comprehensive National Strategy Needed to Help Achieve U.S. Goals* (GAO-06-788) (July 2006).

³ *National Counterterrorism Center Circulates New Interagency Plan*, Inside the Pentagon (July 27, 2006).

Sincerely,

Henry A. Waxman
Ranking Minority Member
Committee on
Government Reform

Ike Skelton
Ranking Minority Member
Committee on
Armed Services

Jane Harman
Ranking Minority Member
Permanent Select Committee on
Intelligence

Tom Lantos
Ranking Minority Member
Committee on
International Relations

John Conyers
Ranking Minority Member
Committee on the
Judiciary

Bennie G. Thompson
Ranking Minority Member
Committee on
Homeland Security