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# Congress of the United States

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September 17, 2004

The Honorable Christopher Shays  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on National Security,  
Emerging Threats and International Relations  
B-372 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I am writing to request that the Subcommittee hold a hearing on the findings of the July 2004 National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) prepared for President Bush by the National Intelligence Council.

As recent reports in the media have disclosed, this classified document is the first formal intelligence estimate on Iraq in two years. As you are aware, the October 2002 NIE estimate on Iraq focused on Iraq's alleged program to reconstitute its weapons of mass destruction program. That document, which was declassified by the Bush Administration, reflected the consensus of major American intelligence agencies, and I believe that the July 2004 NIE should also be declassified. Congress, the public, and particularly U.S. military troops, should have the same awareness of the challenges confronting the U.S. in Iraq in the near future.

The July 2004 NIE, which examined the economic, political, and security situation in Iraq, is described as predicting three possible scenarios in Iraq through the end of 2005.<sup>1</sup> The most optimistic of these scenarios is for a tenuous stability in Iraq. The second possibility is that increased extremism and fragmentation in Iraqi society would impede efforts to build a central government and adversely affect efforts to democratize the country. In a third worst-case scenario, the intelligence council predicted a potential conflict could take place among the

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<sup>1</sup> *U.S. Intelligence Shows Pessimism on Iraq's Future*, New York Times (Sept. 16, 2004).

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country's three main populations — the Sunnis, Shiites and Kurds, possibly leading to a civil war.<sup>2</sup>

The July 2004 NIE is reported to be highly pessimistic regarding Iraq's progress towards a free and democratic government. This contrasts with the rosy public statements that continue to be made by the President and his advisors, optimism that may be hiding the dangerous reality which awaits us there.

The disclosure of the July 2004 NIE would provide the Subcommittee with an opportunity to clarify conflicting positions of the current Administration on Iraq and terrorism. Vice President Cheney famously made the prediction prior to U.S. military operations that Iraqis would greet U.S. troops as liberators. Yet anti-American opinion and insurgencies have increased in recent months, and Iraq has become a haven for terrorist groups. The July 2004 NIE appears to support the view that the stability of the Iraqi government is precarious at best.

The Bush Administration also maintained that the Iraqi regime had stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction, though none have been found to date, either by United Nations inspectors or by the U.S. and its allies. President Bush and Vice President Cheney continue to suggest that there was a connection between the al Qaeda organization and the Iraqi regime, although Secretary of State Colin Powell refuted that direct relationship as recently as last week.<sup>3</sup>

I believe that this Subcommittee must exercise its oversight powers to the fullest and hold the Bush Administration accountable for its decisions, particularly where the use of force is concerned. Over 1,000 U.S. soldiers have already lost their lives while serving in Iraq, and Congress owes all our brave soldiers honest answers. The American public deserves a hearing on the findings of the 2004 NIE report in open session.

The Subcommittee continues to hold important hearings on national security strategies against terrorism, including the effectiveness of classified and unclassified intelligence evaluations. Let us continue to work together to refine our nation's policies against terrorism, and to help foster freedom, democracy, and human rights for the people of Iraq who desire it. This includes acknowledging our mistakes and correcting them in so far as we are able to do so.

While I commend your leadership within Congress in pushing for reorganization of U.S. intelligence agencies and implementation of the recommendations of the 9/11 Commission, I feel it is vital that the Subcommittee act quickly to examine the latest

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<sup>2</sup> *Group Offers Bleak Iraq Assessment*, Associated Press (Sept. 16, 2004).

<sup>3</sup> *Interview with Colin Powell, Secretary of State*, NBC's Meet the Press (Sept. 12, 2004).

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intelligence guiding the Bush Administration's current policy on Iraq. I look forward to an answer to my request.

Sincerely,

Dennis J. Kucinich  
Ranking Minority Member  
Subcommittee on National Security, Emerging  
Threats and International Relations