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September 26, 2006

Shays Holds Hearing on Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty

Washington, D.C. – Congressman Christopher Shays (R-CT) today held an oversight hearing to examine the importance of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and appropriate steps to strengthen the nonproliferation regime.

Shays is Co-Chair of the Nonproliferation Task Force.

Today Shays heard testimony from Dr. Hans Blix, formerly the chief United Nations weapons inspector in Iraq, and now Chairman of the Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission; Mr. William Tobey, Deputy Administrator for Defense Nuclear Nonproliferation, National Nuclear Security Administration, Department of Energy; Mr. Andrew Semmel, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, International Security and Nonproliferation, Department of State; Mr. Jack David, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Combating Weapons of Mass Destruction and Negotiations Policy, Department of Defense; Mr. Gene Aloise, Director, Natural Resources and Environment, Government Accountability Office; Ambassador Thomas Graham, Chairman of the Bipartisan Security Group, Global Security Institute; Mr. Baker Spring, the F. M. Kirby Research Fellow for National Security Policy, The Heritage Foundation; Mr. Jonathan Granoff, President, Global Security Institute; Mr. Henry Sokolski, Executive Director of the Nonproliferation Education Center; and Professor Frank von Hippel, Co-Chairman of the International Panel on Fissile Materials.

The following is Shays opening statement:

"If the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) had not been created nearly 40 years ago and consistently upheld, it is likely there would be many more countries with nuclear weapons.

"As President Ronald Reagan urged at the fifteenth signing anniversary of the NPT, 'All states should rededicate themselves to achieving the purposes of this important treaty and to ensure its continued vitality.'

"Since 1968, nearly 190 nations have signed on to the NPT, and pledged not to pursue nuclear weapons in exchange for access to the benefits of peaceful nuclear technology and a commitment by the United States, Russia, Britain, France and China—all nuclear-weapons states—to negotiate nuclear disarmament.

"In 1987, President Reagan encapsulated a key point of the NPT success when he famously said to then-Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, 'Trust, but verify.' The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards system verifies compliance with the NPT. This system has been the cornerstone of efforts to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

"But a powerful global nuclear threat still remains today. The Treaty is not perfect. States such as India, Pakistan and North Korea have declared they have nuclear weapons.

Terrorist organizations such as al-Qaeda continue to seek chemical, biological, radiological and even nuclear weapons.

“In the face of these threats, rededication to the NPT is especially critical to ensure international peace, stability and security.

“Today we focus on challenges the world community faces from nuclear weapons proliferation and how the non-proliferation regime can be strengthened to effectively counter this threat to our civilization.

“We look forward to three panels of distinguished witnesses testifying before our Committee today who will answer these questions:

- Why has the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons failed to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons?
- What steps should be taken to strengthen compliance with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons?”

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