

NEWS FROM:

International Terrorism and Nonproliferation Subcommittee



U.S. Rep. Ed Royce, Chairman

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Royce Statement on Proliferation Security Initiative

Hearing examines multilateral program to stem proliferation of WMD

WASHINGTON, D.C. - - Today, the House Subcommittee on International Terrorism and Nonproliferation (ITNP) held a hearing to provide an early assessment of the Proliferation Security Initiative. ITNP Chairman U.S. Rep. Ed Royce (R-CA-40) issued the following opening statement:

"President Bush unveiled the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) two years ago in Krakow. The PSI is a post-9/11 U.S.-originated multilateral initiative aimed at stemming the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and WMD-related materials. It aims to interdict WMD cargo on land, in the air, and at sea. Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security John Bolton, who spearheaded its creation, has called PSI 'foremost among President Bush's efforts to stop WMD proliferation.' Today, there are 60 countries supporting the Initiative. PSI is an aggressive response to increasingly sophisticated proliferators who pose a grave threat to our nation's security.

"PSI's most high-profile operation has been the interception of the *BBC China* ship delivering WMD components to Libya in 2003. This contributed to Libya's decision to renounce its WMD program and the unraveling of the A.Q Khan nuclear proliferation network. In general, PSI has received good grades from analysts, other countries, and the U.N. Secretary General, who has endorsed it.

"These can be only partial grades, however. The Administration recently reported that eleven successful PSI interdictions took place in the last nine months. While details are sketchy due to intelligence security concerns, this number included a shipment of material and equipment bound for ballistic missile programs in countries of concern, including Iran. This number of reported interdictions does suggest a worrisome level of proliferation activity. The PSI grade is not complete because we obviously have no idea what proliferation PSI is missing.

"Intelligence collection is the foundation of PSI. Director of National Intelligence John Negroponte recently said, 'PSI makes intelligence actionable.' Yet the Robb-Silberman commission report, released in March, noted that the U.S. intelligence community is ill-equipped to support PSI. As the intelligence community retools, supporting programs like PSI should be central. Last year, a Pentagon group reported, 'Nuclear knowledge, materials, and weapons are oozing out of control.'

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"Some have suggested that PSI risks deflecting attention from other nonproliferation efforts, including the Non-Proliferation Treaty, which recently concluded an unfruitful review conference. Nonproliferation treaties, threat reduction programs, export control regimes, and other efforts should not be shortchanged. We need to be using all tools in the toolbox: PSI may be the hammer; but we need the screwdriver and saw too.

"PSI has been described as 'an activity, not an organization.' It has little institutional structure, and no official membership, headquarters or permanent staff. This brings advantages - avoiding red tape, avoiding a 'lowest common denominator' approach, and avoiding possible political acrimony over selecting interdiction targets. PSI is nimble.

"There are possible drawbacks though. There are some concerns about PSI's staying power as governments change, here and abroad. PSI does not have its own funding base within the State Department budget, even though it aims to expand. John Bolton drove the PSI's creation, showing great commitment, skill and perseverance. He is nominated to go to New York as our ambassador to the United Nations. New leadership will have to press ahead. We should continually reassess this critical activity - WMD interdiction - asking if it is best situated outside the type of organizational framework that is brought to most other diplomatic challenges. That is what we are doing today."

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