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NEWS RELEASE
Committee on Energy and Commerce

Rep. John D. Dingell, Chairman

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Thompson Releases Report on Russian WMD Scientists

January 11, 2008 (WASHINGTON) – Today, Rep. Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS), Chairman of the Committee on Homeland Security, released a Government Accountability Office (GAO) report detailing problems with the Department of Energy's (DOE) Initiatives for Proliferation Prevention (IPP) program which assists and helps re-employ weapons of mass destruction scientists in the former Soviet Union in peaceful new jobs. The report (link below), entitled "DOE's Program to Assist Weapons Scientists in Russia and Other Countries Needs to Be Reassessed," recommended an assessment of the IPP program's value and need, and several immediate changes in program management. Findings include:

- Many of the scientists who received assistance under the program did not claim to have any WMD experience.
- The IPP program has been used to help attract, hire, and retain younger scientists, thereby potentially continuing proliferation risks at those facilities.

- DOE overstated the number of scientists who have been re-employed into full-time, sustainable, private sector jobs as a result of IPP projects.
- DOE has not developed a prioritized list to target the highest risk institutes, and it has not developed an exit strategy despite significant economic improvements and political changes.
- Due to delays, the IPP program has carried over unspent funds in excess of the amount Congress has appropriated for the program for every fiscal year since 1998.

Chairman Thompson issued the following statement with the release of the report:

"Protecting the homeland from acts of WMD terrorism is the foremost national security priority. Today's report by GAO confirms that the United States must do a better job of ensuring that our resources are spent effectively, and that they are focused on the most urgent and highest risk proliferation threats. Chairman Dingell and I both agree that the Administration should undertake a serious review of the IPP program's nonproliferation benefits, in light of both the findings made by GAO and the major changes in Russia over the past decade, to determine whether continued investment in this program compared to other vital nonproliferation efforts makes sense."

"GAO has raised troubling questions about whether a non proliferation program has perversely funded a younger generation of weapons scientists," said Rep. John D. Dingell, Chairman of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce. "GAO has also found that the Department of Energy is using scarce non-proliferation funds to promote the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership in Russia without Congressional authorization, and without any evident prospect of reaching sustainable employment or technology and commercialization."

"The questions raised by the GAO about the effectiveness of the Initiatives for Proliferation Prevention are being folded into a larger investigation into the Administration's strategy for limiting the risks of nuclear proliferation in unstable parts of the world," added Bart Stupak, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations. "I commend Chairman Thompson for requesting this report, and we intend to assess whether the Administration's focus needs to be updated to address the most urgent nuclear security concerns from unstable states and non-state actors."

GAO Report

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Prepared by the Committee on Energy and Commerce

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