

Washington, D.C. - Congressman David Price (NC-04) today introduced legislation that would enact broad reforms to U.S. policies governing the interrogation, detention, and prosecution of terrorist suspects.

Since the September 11 attacks, the Bush Administration has implemented a number of controversial counterterrorism measures, including the Military Commissions Act, the indefinite detention of hundreds of inmates at Guantanamo Bay Detention Center, and the authorization of torture and abusive practices during interrogations. These policies have proven ineffective in the war on terror and have undermined U.S. leadership abroad. Price's legislation would reverse these flawed policies while enacting initiatives to modernize and improve U.S. human intelligence collection capabilities consistent with international law.

"A deep re-examination of our nation's approach to fighting the war on terrorism must be an urgent priority for the next Administration," Price said. "My goal is to offer a constructive proposal for how we might improve our ability to bring terrorists to justice and obtain accurate, timely intelligence."

Price noted that the urgent need for reform was not just a moral priority, but a practical one as well. The military tribunal system established by the Bush Administration has yielded only two convictions in terrorism cases in the last seven years. Civilian courts have obtained convictions in over 145 terrorism cases during the same period.

"If we are to prevail against those who would do us harm, we must have the means to identify threats and bring terrorist suspects to justice. What we've been doing for the last seven years simply hasn't worked," Price said. "We need an approach that combines principled leadership with results, and that's what this bill offers."

Price's legislation, the Interrogation and Detention Reform Act, would combine measures to roll back the most flawed policies of the Bush Administration with proposals to enhance U.S. capacity for human intelligence collection. Specifically, it would repeal the Military Commissions Act and endorse the existing civilian and military justice systems as the most appropriate venues for prosecuting terrorist suspects. The bill also would close Guantanamo Bay Detention Center. In addition, it would establish uniform, government-wide standards for interrogation that explicitly prohibit torture, and ban contractors from conducting interrogations.

At the same time, the Interrogation and Detention Reform Act would enact forward-looking proposals designed to strengthen intelligence collection, including the creation of a center of excellence for interrogation training and research, as recommended by the Intelligence Science Board, and the development of an expert cadre of career military interrogators. It would also require a strategy to prevent radicalization of inmates at both domestic and overseas detention facilities.

Original cosponsors of the bill include Rep. Rush Holt (NJ), Chairman of the House Select Intelligence Oversight Panel; and Rep. John Larson (CT), Democratic Caucus Vice Chairman; as well as Reps. Mel Watt (NC), Brad Miller (NC) James McGovern (MA), Rosa DeLauro (CT), Earl Blumenauer (OR), John Olver (MA), and Maurice Hinchey (NY).

Price chairs the House Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee and the House Democracy Assistance Commission. He is also the author of a House-passed bill (H.R. 2740) to ensure that war contractors are held accountable for criminal acts.

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