

OPENING REMARKS OF CHAIRMAN HUNTER

Consideration of House Resolution 417

September 20, 2005

We're going to consider House Resolution 417, a resolution of inquiry requesting any material in the possession of the Secretary of Defense regarding the Victoria Plame matter. We've been down this road before. Just over a year ago, the committee approved an adverse recommendation on a similar resolution. Nothing has happened since then that would warrant a change in the committee's position.

As many will recall, the CIA referred the matter of Ms. Plame's identity to the Justice Department, which appropriately began an investigation. By this time last year, a career U.S. attorney had been appointed as a special counsel to look into the matter. The U.S. attorney, Patrick Fitzgerald, convened a grand jury and recently informed the courts that his investigation is substantially complete—over two years after the issue first arose. One reporter, Judith Miller of the New York Times, sits in jail for refusing to cooperate with the investigation. We do not know—because he cannot comment on it—the status of any indictments or other legal proceedings that Mr. Fitzgerald may be contemplating. But, I think the fact that Ms. Miller is in jail is a strong indicator that Mr. Fitzgerald is committed to a thorough investigation and seeing that the laws are upheld—no matter where the chips fall.

In other words, the system is working exactly as it was meant to. Non-partisan career prosecutors are conducting a professional criminal investigation and have all the authority they require to indict any persons suspected of criminal activity.

Nevertheless, House Resolution 417 was introduced requesting all the information related to the matter that might be in the possession of the Secretary of Defense. As I mentioned, the committee rejected a nearly-identical resolution eighteen months ago. I believed then, as I believe now, that a Congressional review of the matter could easily interfere with a criminal investigation and any indictments that might result. In fact, we have received a letter from the Justice Department which notes, "Mr. Fitzgerald has advised that production at this time of the documents responsive to H. Res 417 and the other Resolutions, and any attendant hearings, would interfere with his investigation."

With that in mind, I will vote for an adverse recommendation on the resolution and urge my colleagues to do the same.