

budget within 5 years, and that is the right path for our country.

I want to thank OMB Director Rob Portman for his hard work in developing this plan. This was Rob's last Cabinet meeting. Laura and I wish him and his family well. And I call on the Senate to confirm his successor, Jim Nussle, so we can work together to keep our Government running, to keep our economy growing, and to keep our Nation strong.

Thank you for your time.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:54 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of Transportation Mary E. Peters; Gov. Tim Pawlenty of Minnesota; and Mayor R.T. Rybak of Minneapolis, MN. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks Following a Meeting With the Counterterrorism Team

August 3, 2007

I thank you all for coming. Director Mueller, thank you for your hospitality. I'm honored to be here at the headquarters of the FBI. Just had a beginning of a series of meetings today, and during those meetings it is clear that people around that table fully understand we have no higher duty than to protect the American people. And so I'm pleased to be with my homeland security and counterterrorism teams. We've got folks in our government who spend every day working side by side with like-minded men and women in our Federal Government, all aiming to protect you, doing everything they can to protect the American people from a dangerous enemy.

I'm going to spend a little time later on this afternoon with intelligence analysts who spend every day analyzing data, attempting to track down known and suspected terrorists who either may be here or elsewhere. We've done a lot of work since September the 11th to make this country safe, and it is safer, but it's not completely safe. It's important for the American people to understand there are coldblooded killers who want to come to our homeland and wreak havoc through death. And that's what we were discussing today.

We take a clear-eyed view of the world. The people on this team, assembled in this building, see the world the way it is, not the way we hope it is. And this is a dangerous world because there's an enemy that wants to strike the homeland again. You know, it was a year ago that I met with the counterterrorism team—that we worked with Great Britain to uncover a airline plot, a plot that had it gone forward would have caused death on a massive scale. It was a reminder that the terrorists we face are sophisticated; they are coldblooded; they are changing tactics, and we must always stay ahead of them.

In other words, we've got to do more than just keep pace with these people. We've got to be ahead of the people in order to protect the American people, in order to do our most important duty. And that's what we're talking about today.

Part of the effort to do our job, part of the effort for this Federal Government to do the job the American people expects us to do in protecting you is to close intelligence gaps. We have such an intelligence gap in the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act. The act needs to be modernized so that all of us engaged in protecting the American people say we have the tools we need to protect you. Leaders in Congress have said they would like to address this problem before they go home. I appreciate that spirit.

The Director of National Intelligence, Mike McConnell, has provided the Congress with a narrow and targeted piece of legislation that will close the gaps in intelligence. In other words, he's working on the Hill, and he's told Members this is what we need to do our job to protect the American people. It's the bare minimum the DNI said he needs to do his job. When Congress sends me their version, when Congress listens to all the data and facts and they send me a version of how to close those gaps, I'll ask one question. And I'm going to ask the DNI: "Does this legislation give you what you need to prevent an attack on the country? Is this what you need to do your job, Mr. DNI?" That's the question I'm going to ask. And if the answer is yes, I'll sign the bill. And if the answer is no, I'm going to veto the bill.

And so far the Democrats in Congress have not drafted a bill I can sign. We've worked hard and in good faith with the Democrats to find a solution, but we are not going to put our national security at risk. Time is short. I'm going to ask Congress to stay in session until they pass a bill that will give our intelligence community the tools they need to protect the United States.

Thank you for your time.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:41 a.m. at the J. Edgar Hoover FBI Building. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Statement on Signing the Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007

August 3, 2007

Today I signed into law the "Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007." This legislation builds upon the considerable progress we have made in strengthening our defenses and protecting Americans since the attacks of September 11, 2001. In the largest restructuring of our Government since World War II, we created the Department of Homeland Security to better coordinate the protection and response capabilities of our Government. The Director of National Intelligence leads a restructured intelligence community that is better able to uncover, understand, and counter threats from terrorists. To implement the recommendations of the 9/11 Commission, I have issued numerous Executive orders, Presidential directives, and national strategies. I have also signed into law the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004, the PATRIOT Act, and other important pieces of legislation.

I am pleased that the legislation I signed today protects Americans from being unduly prosecuted for reporting activity that could lead to acts of terrorism. I also appreciate the steps taken to modernize the Visa Waiver Program, particularly the additional security measures, but I will continue to work with Congress to advance our security and foreign policy objectives by allowing greater flexibility to bring some of our closest allies into

the program. I will also continue to work with Congress to ensure the workability of the cargo screening provisions in a way that increases our vigilance on homeland security while ensuring the continuance of vital commerce. And I appreciate the willingness of Congress to remove several provisions that had previously generated concern.

There is still other work to be done. I continue to believe that Congress should act on the outstanding 9/11 Commission recommendations to reform the legislative branch's oversight of intelligence and counterterrorism activities, which the Commission described as dysfunctional. While this legislation does not heed the Commission's advice, I hope Congress revisits the issue soon.

I also believe it is important to recognize the urgent need for Congress to pass legislation to modernize the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, a decades-old law that should be updated to address changes in communication technology while protecting the civil liberties of our citizens. The Director of National Intelligence has stated unequivocally that without this change in the law, we will continue to miss significant amounts of information that we should be collecting to protect against potential terrorist attacks.

Congress should also continue to strive to better target grant dollars to cities and States based on risk. This legislation makes some progress, but it also authorizes billions of dollars for grants and other programs that are unnecessary or should not be funded at such excessive levels. I will not request this excessive funding in my 2009 budget request.

I thank members of both parties in Congress who worked on this legislation, and I appreciate the willingness of members to strengthen provisions we believed would have weakened our security. Leaders in Washington should never forget that our most important duty is to protect the American people. I will continue to work with the Congress to ensure we are doing everything we can to keep our Nation safe.

NOTE: H.R. 1, approved August 3, was assigned Public Law No. 110-53.