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## President Bush Meets with Counterterrorism Team

J. Edgar Hoover FBI Building  
Washington, D.C.

11:41 A.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: 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 cold-blooded 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 an 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 cold-blooded, 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.

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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.

END 11:44 A.M. EDT

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