

to marshal all the elements of our national power to confront the extremists, to deny them safe haven, and above all to deny them the means to wage catastrophic attacks against the United States. He also made clear that in the post-9/11 era, regimes that harbor terrorists and defy the demands of the civilized world should be held to account -- before it's too late.

Having been attacked at home, we took decisive steps to make the country less vulnerable to attack, and to improve our ability to respond to a national emergency. We set up the Department of Homeland Security and a new counterterrorism center. We shifted the FBI's focus from investigating terrorist attacks to preventing them. The President signed the Patriot Act, which took down the legal and bureaucratic wall that kept law enforcement and intelligence authorities from sharing vital information.

We also stepped up intelligence operations -- to better figure out the movements of the enemy, the extent of their network, the location of the cells, the plans they're making, the methods they use, the targets they want to hit. Information of this kind is the hardest to obtain, but it's worth the effort in terms of the plots that are averted and the lives that have been saved. So our government has taken careful but urgent steps to monitor the communications of enemies at large, and to get information from the ones that we have apprehended.

We instituted the Terrorist Surveillance Program, to monitor international terrorist-related communications. If somebody inside the United States is talking to a terrorist overseas, we need to know about it so we can protect the American people. (Applause.)

To defend American lives, we went to work getting information from the terrorists themselves. One way we've done that is through interrogations. And here it's important for Americans to understand what we are doing, why we are doing it, and what we are not doing. There's been a good deal of misinformation about the interrogation program run by the CIA. Many unfair and uninformed statements have been made about America's intentions and about the conduct of our intelligence officers. A lot of details are, understandably, classified. Yet the basic facts are these. A small number of high-value detainees have gone through a special program run by the CIA. The CIA program involves tough customers and tough interrogations -- but it is entirely legal and proper. The procedures are designed to be safe in full compliance with this nation's laws and treaty obligations. They've been carefully reviewed by the Department of Justice. The program is run by highly trained professionals who understand their obligations under the law. And, as the President has made clear, the program has uncovered a wealth of information that has foiled specific attacks -- information that has on numerous occasions made the difference between life and death. Intelligence personnel who have gathered that information have done a great service to our country. They are protecting Americans' lives, and they deserve the nation's gratitude. (Applause.)

No nation in the world takes human rights more seriously than the United States. The policies of our country comply with our law, which prohibits torture. We're proud of our country and what it stands for. We expect all who serve America to conduct themselves with honor. And we enforce the rules. Some years ago, abuses were committed at Abu Ghraib prison -- conduct that was not authorized and that did violate the law. When those abuses came to light, Americans were rightly outraged. Those who violated the law were arrested, prosecuted and punished, as justice demanded. The misdeeds of a few should never be used to slander the good and decent Americans who go to work every day to keep this country safe. (Applause.)