

THE WHITE HOUSE
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Statement by the President Report of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence

Throughout our history, the United States of America has done more than any other nation to stand up for freedom, democracy, and the inherent dignity and human rights of people around the world. As Americans, we owe a profound debt of gratitude to our fellow citizens who serve to keep us safe, among them the dedicated men and women of our intelligence community, including the Central Intelligence Agency. Since the horrific attacks of 9/11, these public servants have worked tirelessly to devastate core al Qaeda, deliver justice to Osama bin Laden, disrupt terrorist operations and thwart terrorist attacks. Solemn rows of stars on the Memorial Wall at the CIA honor those who have given their lives to protect ours. Our intelligence professionals are patriots, and we are safer because of their heroic service and sacrifices.

In the years after 9/11, with legitimate fears of further attacks and with the responsibility to prevent more catastrophic loss of life, the previous administration faced agonizing choices about how to pursue al Qaeda and prevent additional terrorist attacks against our country. As I have said before, our nation did many things right in those difficult years. At the same time, some of the actions that were taken were contrary to our values. That is why I unequivocally banned torture when I took office, because one of our most effective tools in fighting terrorism and keeping Americans safe is staying true to our ideals at home and abroad.

Today's report by the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence details one element of our nation's response to 9/11—the CIA's detention and interrogation program, which I formally ended on one of my first days in

office. The report documents a troubling program involving enhanced interrogation techniques on terrorism suspects in secret facilities outside the United States, and it reinforces my long-held view that these harsh methods were not only inconsistent with our values as a nation, they did not serve our broader counterterrorism efforts or our national security interests. Moreover, these techniques did significant damage to America's standing in the world and made it harder to pursue our interests with allies and partners. That is why I will continue to use my authority as President to make sure we never resort to those methods again.

As Commander in Chief, I have no greater responsibility than the safety and security of the American people. We will therefore continue to be relentless in our fight against al Qaeda, its affiliates and other violent extremists. We will rely on all elements of our national power, including the power and example of our founding ideals. That is why I have consistently supported the declassification of today's report. No nation is perfect. But one of the strengths that makes America exceptional is our willingness to openly confront our past, face our imperfections, make changes and do better. Rather than another reason to refight old arguments, I hope that today's report can help us leave these techniques where they belong—in the past. Today is also a reminder that upholding the values we profess doesn't make us weaker, it makes us stronger and that the United States of America will remain the greatest force for freedom and human dignity that the world has ever known.