

Bush acknowledges secret CIA prisons

NEDRA PICKLER
ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — U.S. President George W. Bush acknowledged Wednesday the existence of previously secret CIA prisons around the world where key terrorist suspects have been held and questioned.

He said the “small number” of detainees that fall into this category includes people responsible for the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in the United States, the bombing of the USS Cole in 2000 in Yemen and the 1998 attacks on U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania.

“The most important source of information on where the terrorists are hiding and what they are planning is the terrorists themselves,” Mr. Bush said in a White House speech with families of those killed in the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks making up part of the audience. “It has been necessary to move these individuals to an environment where they can be held in secret, questioned by experts and, when appropriate, prosecuted for terrorist acts.”

The announcement is the first time the administration has acknowledged the existence of CIA prisons, which have been a source of friction between Washington and some allies in Europe. The administration has come under criticism for its treatment of terrorism detainees. European Union lawmakers said the CIA was conducting clandestine flights in Europe to take terror suspects to countries where they could face torture.

Related to this article



Latest Comments

- RE: Post #1- It appears that all of the sun in Florida has had...
- Andy Garret #1 - I noticed that people like Bill Clinton, Jimmy...
- #43 Bo Kavac - just cuz we're flying the shuttle this week doesn...
- These are war crimes - secret prisons, disappeared prisoners...
- 70 reader comments | Comments closed



Mr. Bush said the CIA program has involved such high-value terrorists as Khalid Sheik Mohammed, believed to be the No. 3 al-Qaeda leader before he was captured in Pakistan in 2003; Ramzi Binalshibh, an alleged would-be Sept. 11, 2001, hijacker; Abu Zubaydah, who was believed to be a link between Osama bin Laden and many al-Qaeda cells before he was also captured in Pakistan, in March, 2002.

The list also includes Riduan Isamuddin, known additionally as Hambali, who was suspected of being Jemaah Islamiyah's main link to al-Qaeda and the mastermind of a string of deadly bomb attacks in Indonesia until his 2003 arrest in Thailand.

Defending the program, the President said the questioning of these detainees has provided critical intelligence information about terrorist activities that have enabled officials to prevent attacks not only in the United States, but

Europe and other countries. He said the program has been reviewed by administration lawyers and been the subject of strict oversight from within the CIA.

Mr. Bush would not detail the type of interrogation techniques that are used through the program, saying it was tough but was not torture.

“This program has helped us to take potential mass murderers off the streets before they have a chance to kill,” Mr. Bush said. “It is invaluable to America and our allies.”

The President's announcement, which the White House touted beforehand and asked to be televised live on the networks, comes as Mr. Bush has sought with a series of speeches to sharpen the focus on national security two months before high-stakes congressional elections.

He successfully emphasized the war on terror in his re-election campaign in 2004 and is trying to make it a winning issue again for Republicans this year.

© Copyright 2006 Bell Globemedia Publishing Inc. All Rights Reserved.



globeandmail.com and The Globe and Mail are divisions of Bell Globemedia Publishing Inc., 444 Front St. W., Toronto, Canada M5V 2S9
Phillip Crawley, Publisher