Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of House Resolution

861, expressing our continued dedication to the global war on terror

and the brave men and women serving on the front lines in that war.

Alongside their counterparts from across the world, they have worked on

our behalf to confront terrorist elements and foster freedom in the

name of peace and stability.

I want to focus my remarks on the extraordinary efforts of the Bush

administration to improve our Nation's intelligence-gathering

capabilities and prevent future terrorist attacks. Armed with the new

tools Congress provided in the Use of Force Resolution, the USA PATRIOT

Act, and other intelligence laws, our military, law enforcement, and

intelligence communities have scored many successes in the last 4

years. Their efforts to track terrorist networks and decipher their

plans have broken up sinister plots here at home and around

the world. An FBI supervisor has confirmed that the PATRIOT Act led to

the breakup of an al Qaeda cell in suburban Buffalo, NY. And just a few

days ago, months of painstaking information gathering by U.S., Iraqi,

Jordanian, and other sources resulted in the killing of the terrorist

mastermind Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.

For all the well-earned kudos that have been heaped upon the military

and intelligence communities for their successful mission against

Zarqawi, most of their successes aren't widely known and can't be

publicly broadcast. The intelligence community can't take credit for

them for fear of giving away secrets about their modes and methods of

gathering this valuable information.

Which is why the revelation in the media last year of the National

Security Agency's terrorist surveillance program was an outrageous

breach of national security.

This leak--timed to coincide with Congress's debate on reauthorizing

the USA PATRIOT Act--let al Qaeda and other terrorist groups know that

the NSA had been intercepting the international communications of

individuals with links to their groups.

Then-CIA Director Porter Goss confirmed before the Senate

Intelligence Committee that the damage caused by the leak has been

``very severe,'' leading to the loss or disruption of some sources and

methods--not to mention the damage caused to our relationships with our

intelligence counterparts in other countries.

This program has provided valuable intelligence on terrorist

activities. CIA Director Michael Hayden, who oversaw this program at

the NSA, stated ``unequivocally'' that we have obtained information

through the terrorist surveillance program that would not otherwise

have been available.

It's also consistent with Congress's direction that the President use

``all necessary and appropriate force'' against nations, groups, and

individuals found to be responsible for the 9/11 attacks. We have

tracked and intercepted calls in cases where we have reason to believe

that at least one party in the conversation is a member of al Qaeda.

The program is also fully compliant with existing law, and has been

reviewed by the Justice Department and White House counsel roughly

every 45 days. Congress has been briefed regularly on its provisions,

consistent with the National Security Act of 1947. Chairman Pete

Hoekstra has confirmed that congressional leadership, along with the

leaders of the two intelligence committees, had numerous opportunities

to express concerns about the program.

Sadly, rather than giving the administration credit for working to

gather intelligence and ``connect the dots,'' the outrage of some in

this Congress has been directed not at those who leaked information

about the program, but at the NSA and the White House. Unbelievably,

four of our colleagues in the other body even introduced a resolution

to censure the President over this program--a program that, had it been

in place before 9/11, could have led the NSA to locate and identify two

of the 9/11 hijackers who settled in San Diego in 2000.

It's simply irresponsible to claim that this program is outside the

administration's authority, since leaders of both parties have had

every opportunity to express misgivings over the last 4\1/2\ years.

Frankly, it smacks of political grandstanding that criticisms were

raised only after the program's existence was leaked to the New York

Times.

Some have tried to minimize the significance of this leak, saying

that terrorists obviously know that we're spying on them. But the truth

is that terrorist cells need to communicate, and they'll keep using

methods of communication that they know to work--and stop using methods

that have been compromised. You can guarantee they'll move on to other

modes of communication, now that details of the terrorist surveillance

program have been publicized.

It also defies logic to suggest that the privacy of communications

with known terrorists is constitutionally protected. Just like in every

military conflict our Nation has fought, the interception of enemy

communications has been a fundamental part of the war on terror. The

day after Pearl Harbor, President Franklin Roosevelt authorized the

interception of all communications into and out of the United States.

That act was necessary and lawful--as is this more focused interception

of al Qaeda communications, given the nature of the enemy we face.

Future al Qaeda attacks on our homeland are likely to be conducted by

operatives who are already here. Identifying and tracking them is a

sizable challenge, and it's preposterous to suggest that our

intelligence professionals will cast such a wide net that they threaten

the privacy of ordinary American citizens in doing this work. They

don't want useless information that takes them off the trail of

criminals and terrorists; they have neither the time nor the resources

to waste. They're constantly working against the clock to counter

terrorists and terrorist sympathizers who are preparing to attack when

and where they can.

As a special agent of the FBI, I conducted wiretaps. They're wrapped

in layers of legal protections and never done without probable cause.

The NSA's actions simply give intelligence services the same wiretap

authorities that have been available to those fighting organized crime

and drug lords. Americans not in contact with al Qaeda can be assured

that their rights have not been violated.

Even as we debate this legislation, terrorist groups are plotting to

kill Americans. If the NSA tracks a call from a known terrorist in

Afghanistan to a phone number somewhere in the U.S., it's in our best

interest to know who's on the other end of that call and what they're

talking about.

This is no time to let our guard down or publicize details of our

clandestine intelligence work. The fact that we have not had a major

terrorist attack in this Nation since 9/11 is no accident. The focused

efforts of our intelligence officials have helped detect and prevent

attacks, and we as a nation are safer as a result. They deserve our

gratitude, as do all of our service men and women serving on our behalf

on all fronts in the global war on terror.