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Statement of

The Honorable Russ Feingold

United States Senator
Wisconsin
May 13, 2009

Statement of U.S. Senator Russ Feingold
Hearing on "Torture and the Office of Legal Counsel in the Bush Administration"
Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Administrative Oversight and the Courts

"This hearing is an important step in shedding light on one of the worst abuses of the past administration. Let me be perfectly clear. This so-called enhanced interrogation program was illegal. It was contrary to our national values. And it undermined our national security. Like Chairman Whitehouse, I am a member of the Intelligence Committee. Nothing I have seen – including the two documents to which former Vice President Cheney has repeatedly referred – indicates that the torture techniques authorized by the last administration were necessary, or that they were the best way to get information out of detainees. The former vice president is misleading the American people when he says otherwise.

"Mr. Chairman, I support further declassifications, including of the rest of the Justice Department memos and letters on this program, the Inspector General report, and the work of the Intelligence Committee, provided their release would not jeopardize national security. I have also sought the declassification of my own correspondence, which I sent to then-CIA Director Hayden, detailing my opposition to the program.

"While the revelations of the past month are uncomfortable for some, they are absolutely essential if this country is to return to the rule of law. I am pleased that members of the Judiciary Committee and the Intelligence Committee are moving forward to determine exactly what happened. I continue to believe an independent commission, as Chairman Leahy has proposed, is needed, so that we can finally understand and come to terms with this dark chapter in our recent history."