

Bush asks Daschle to limit Sept. 11 probes

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WASHINGTON (CNN) -- President Bush personally asked Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle Tuesday to limit the congressional investigation into the events of September 11, congressional and White House sources told CNN.

The request was made at a private meeting with congressional leaders Tuesday morning. Sources said Bush initiated the conversation.

He asked that only the House and Senate intelligence committees look into the potential breakdowns among federal agencies that could have allowed the terrorist attacks to occur, rather than a broader inquiry that some lawmakers have proposed, the sources said

Tuesday's discussion followed a rare call to Daschle from Vice President Dick Cheney last Friday to make the same request.

"The vice president expressed the concern that a review of what happened on September 11 would take resources and personnel away from the effort in the war on terrorism," Daschle told reporters.

But, Daschle said, he has not agreed to limit the investigation.

"I acknowledged that concern, and it is for that reason that the Intelligence Committee is going to begin this effort, trying to limit the scope and the overall review of what happened," said Daschle, D-South Dakota.

"But clearly, I think the American people are entitled to know what happened and why," he said.

Cheney met last week in the Capitol with the chairmen of the House and Senate intelligence committees and, according to a spokesman for Senate Intelligence Chairman Bob Graham, D-Florida, "agreed to cooperate with their effort."

The heads of both intelligence committees have been meeting to map out a way to

hold a bipartisan House-Senate investigation and hearings.

They were discussing how the inquiry would proceed, including what would be made public, what would remain classified, and how broad the probe would be.

Graham's spokesman said the committees will review intelligence matters only.

"How ill prepared were we and why? We are looking towards the possibility of addressing systemic problems through legislation," said spokesman Paul Anderson.

Some Democrats, such as Sens. Joseph Lieberman of Connecticut and Robert Torricelli of New Jersey, have been calling for a broad inquiry looking at various federal government agencies beyond the intelligence community.

"We do not meet our responsibilities to the American people if we do not take an honest look at the federal government and all of its agencies and let the country know what went wrong," Torricelli said.

"The best assurance that there's not another terrorist attack on the United States is not simply to hire more federal agents or spend more money. It's to take an honest look at what went wrong. Who or what failed? There's an explanation owed to the American people," he said.

Although the president and vice president told Daschle they were worried a wide-reaching inquiry could distract from the government's war on terrorism, privately Democrats questioned why the White House feared a broader investigation to determine possible culpability.

"We will take a look at the allocation of resources. Ten thousand federal agents -- where were they? How many assets were used, and what signals were missed?" a Democratic senator told CNN.

-- CNN Capitol Hill Producer Dana Bash and CNN Correspondents Jon Karl and John King contributed to this report.

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