

OPINION

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Spying Akin to J. Edgar Hoover

Bush justifications, attacks mislead



BY U.S. REP. MAXINE WATERS
President Bush's decision to bypass the U.S. Constitution and laws to permit the National Security Agency to spy on American citizens is very problematic.

The description of the NSA program is reminiscent of the COINTELPRO program in which the FBI, under J. Edgar Hoover, spied on the leaders of the civil rights movement, including the Black Panther Party.

The House of Representatives and the Senate must fulfill its constitutional duty and hold hearings on the NSA program. We cannot hide behind the false argument that this program was authorized in the name of national security. If the President believed he needed more power to conduct the war on terrorism, he should have asked the Congress to authorize such powers, not declare them on his own.

It is important to note that telling the House and Senate party leaders and the chair and ranking members of the two Intelligence Committees about the program is not Congressional oversight or approval as the Administration implies.

It doesn't matter that the president says only individuals with possible ties to al Qaeda are being monitored; as a people we have learned that his words are not always truthful.

Furthermore, the president's claim that no member of Congress expressed concern about the program is false. In 2003, Sen. John Rockefeller wrote Vice-President Cheney expressing concern about the program and House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi has also said that she expressed her concerns about the program to the Administration.

The president knows full well that this program was classified and these members of Congress would have violated the law if they went public with their concerns about the NSA program. These attacks are yet another attempt by the president, the vice-president and other Administration officials to smear its critics and mislead the American people about the justifications for their actions.

We saw the Administration's tactics during the run up to the war in Iraq and the leaking of Valerie Plame's name and now we see it in the justifications for spying on American citizens.

The existence of the NSA program is exactly why many Members of Congress have misgivings about reauthorizing the Patriot Act as the President demands. Many of us, Democrat and Republican, are concerned that the Patriot Act could allow the Administration to violate the civil rights of Americans.

Maxine Waters is a Democrat from California and member of the Congressional Black Caucus.

GEORGE W. BUSH: A LEADER WHO LISTENS To THE PEOPLE!



Beware Of Federal Wire Taps

Outrageous spying must be investigated

BY JUDGE GREG MATHIS

"Yeah, I did it. So what?" That's basically the stance President Bush took when the news was leaked that the government listened in on international phone calls without a warrant - all in the name of fighting terrorism. Bush, angry that the information had been disclosed, defended his actions and went on to say he will continue to use secret international wiretaps to monitor the activities of people in the U.S. that are believed to have connections with the ever elusive al Qaeda.

Perhaps this news that the rights of citizens were being violated would be easier to digest if the government didn't have a habit, one that goes back several decades, of using its intelligence activities to infringe upon the civil

liberties of law-abiding citizens and civil rights organizations

Bush took and twisted the authority granted to him after 9/11 and allowed the National Security Agency to eavesdrop on overseas calls made or received by Americans. The NSA intercepts billions of communications across the world, but is banned from doing any spying here at home without first getting approval from the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act Court. The President maintains the information that has been gathered has prevented another terrorist attack and saved countless lives. If this is true, where is the proof?

For those who say, "If you're not doing anything wrong, none of this should matter," they should know that government has 'spied' on, or investigated, several American civil rights and political organizations. There isn't any evidence that these groups had done anything wrong, they just happened to oppose the current administration.

According to the documents recently released by the American Civil Liberties Union, an organization founded in 1920 to protect

the rights of all citizens, the federal government has collected data on People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals and Greenpeace, an environmental group. The FBI even has over 1,000 pages of information on the ACLU, a leading critic of Bush and his war on terror.

or anywhere else in the world could unknowingly have their simple call home subjected to the prying - and illegally tuned - ears of the U.S. government. It doesn't matter that the president says only individuals with possible ties to al Qaeda are being monitored; as a people we have learned that his words are not

If the President believed he needed more power to conduct the war on terrorism, he should have asked the Congress to authorize such powers, not declare them on his own.

This isn't the first time in this nation's history that law-abiding organizations have been monitored by the government. During the black liberation movement, the FBI's Counter Intelligence Program investigated and disrupted the activities of so-called radical individuals and organizations, including Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the Black Panthers, Malcolm X and the Nation of Islam.

Anyone still not understanding the severity of the President's actions should consider that our brothers and sisters calling loved ones in Jamaica, Trinidad, Kenya

always truthful. Much of the nation, including lawmakers - Democrats and Republicans alike - is infuriated by not only the revelation that these interceptions occurred, but by Bush's cocky responses to the questions that followed. Let's hope this outrage leads to investigations into the president's actions and, ultimately, and end to this and similar practices.

Judge Greg Mathis is national vice president of Rainbow PUSH and a national board member of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

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