

Oppose "Patriot Act II"!

When the Patriot Act passed in October 2001, it included several so-called "sunset clauses:" particular provisions which would expire at the end of 2005 without Congressional re-authorization. The Bush administration is now working to make these provisions permanent.

The Patriot Act expanded the government's power to conduct secret wiretaps, secretly search homes, access computer records, use evidence collected by illegal search and seizure, and lock up and deport non-citizens without presenting evidence.

Senator Orrin Hatch has drafted a proposal which would repeal the sunset provisions. According to the New York Times "Many Democrats have grown increasingly frustrated by what they see as a lack of information from the Justice Department on how its agents are using their newfound powers, and they say they need more time to determine whether agents are abusing those powers."(1) MIM says we already know enough about how the Justice Department is using these powers. No more time for assessment is needed; the powers should be revoked.

The Washington Post reported: "The FBI, for example, has issued scores of 'national security letters' that require businesses to turn over electronic records about finances, telephone calls, e-mail and other personal information, according to officials and documents. The letters, a type of administrative subpoena, may be issued independently by FBI field offices and are not subject to judicial review unless a case comes to court, officials said. Attorney General John D. Ashcroft has also personally signed more than 170 'emergency

foreign intelligence warrants,' three times the number authorized in the preceding 23 years, according to recent congressional testimony. Federal law allows the attorney general to issue unilaterally these classified warrants for wiretaps and physical searches of suspected terrorists and other national security threats under certain circumstances. They can be enforced for 72 hours before they are subject to review and approval by the ultra-secret Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court."(2)

Another recent bill in the Senate would remove the requirement that federal agents show a suspect is affiliated with a foreign power or agent to get a secret surveillance warrant. In essence agents could justify secret spying on anyone just by claiming they are a "terrorist." Republicans are talking about attaching Hatch's proposal as to make the Patriot Act provisions permanent as an amendment to this proposal. Some Republicans claim this is just a threat to keep Democrats from trying to tone down the bill. But it is clear that there will be a push to remove the sunset provisions from the Patriot Act some time before 2005.

If the Amerikan government truly seeks to make this country safer it should stop bombing innocent people around the world in its push for greater wealth and world hegemony. This aggression only incurs greater wrath from the world's people. And no amount of spying, or fascist domestic control will create peace and safety.

Notes:

1. New York Times, April 9, 2003.
2. Washington Post, March 24, 2003.

Get signatures on a petition urging Federal representatives not to support John Ashcroft's Domestic Security Enhancement Act!

Get the petition: <http://www.etext.org/Politics/MIM/agitation/civlib/>

Sign it online: <http://www.PetitionOnline.com/civlib/petition.html>

If enacted, the Patriot Act II would

- *authorize secret arrests including those of material witnesses who are not charged with a crime;
- *bar defense attorneys from challenging use of secret evidence;
- *deny the right to sue for information on detainees under the Freedom of Information Act;
- *permit arrests and extraditions of citizens and non-citizens alike to countries with which the U.S. has no extradition treaties and without regard for those countries' humyn rights records;
- *strip American citizenship from anyone who supports even the lawful activities of organizations the administration calls "terrorist;"
- *create a new category of "domestic security surveillance" for terrorism investigations with looser standards than criminal investigations,
- *provide for extended jail terms for common immigration offenses; and
- *allow summary deportation to any country in the world.

Like its predecessor, it would principally impact non-citizens.

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