

# Bringing It All Back Home: The Emergence of the Homeland Security State

By [Nick Turse](#)

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## Excerpts

In the wake of September 11, 2001, with the announcement of a potentially never-ending “war on terror” and in the name of “national security,” the Bush administration embarked on a global campaign that left in its wake two war-ravaged states (with up to one hundred thousand civilian dead in just one of them); an offshore “archipelago of injustice” replete with “ghost jails” and a seemingly endless series of cases of torture, abuse, and the cold-blooded murder of prisoners. That was abroad. In the U.S.A., too, things have changed as America became “the Homeland” and an already powerful and bloated national security state developed a civilian corollary fed by fear-mongering, partisan politics, and an insatiable desire for governmental power, turf, and budget.

A host of disturbing and mutually-reinforcing patterns have emerged in the resulting new Homeland Security State — among them:

A virtually unopposed increase in the intrusion of military, intelligence, and “security” agencies into the civilian sector of American society;

Federal abridgment of basic rights;

Denials of civil liberties on flimsy or previously illegal premises;

Warrant-less sneak-and-peak searches;

The wholesale undermining of privacy safeguards (including government access to library circulation records, bank records, and records of internet activity);

The greater empowerment of secret intelligence courts (like the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act court) that threaten civil liberties;

Heavy-handed federal and local law enforcement tactics designed to chill, squelch, or silence dissent.

## Nick Turse on the Homeland Security State (Part I)

### **Note also:**

.... the FBI has apparently been using Joint Terrorism Task Forces (teams of state and local law enforcement officers, FBI and other federal agents) as well as local police to conduct “political surveillance” of environmental activists as well as anti-war and religious-based protest groups.

Read on – important insights for ‘living under the empire’ in this lengthy analysis.

Turse says in fact – If you’re reading this on the Internet, the FBI may be spying on you at this very moment.

See also The Rise of the Homeland Security State  
<http://www.tomdispatch.com/index.mhtml?pid=1786>

### **Excerpt and Editorial Comment courtesy of Janet Eaton**

**Editorial Introduction by [www.tomdispatch.com](http://www.tomdispatch.com)**

**tomgram:**

### **Nick Turse on the Homeland Security State (Part I)**

Since ancient Rome, imperial republics have invariably felt a tension between cherished republican practices at home and distinctly unrepublican ones abroad; or put another way, if imperial practices spread far enough beyond the republic’s borders and gain enough traction out there in the imperium, sooner or later they also make the reverse journey home, and then you have a crisis in — or simply the destruction of — the republic itself. The urge of the Bush administration to bring versions of the methods it’s applying abroad back home is already palpable; the urge to free the President, as “commander-in-chief” in the “war on terror,” from all the old fetters, those boring, restraining checks and balances, those inconvenient liberties won by Americans — so constraining, so troublesome to deal with — is equally palpable.

Back in the Watergate era, we had a would-be imperial president, Richard M. Nixon, who provoked a constitutional crisis. Actually, it amounted to a near constitutional coup d’état — and if you don’t believe me, check out *The Time of Illusion*, Jonathan’s Schell’s classic work on the subject. Now, it seems, we’re in Watergate II, but without a Democratic Congress, a critical media, or a powerful antiwar movement (yet). All we have at the moment is the constitutional crisis part of the equation, various simmering scandals, a catastrophic war abroad, and an ever more powerful military-industrial-security complex at home. And we’re not just talking urges here, we’re talking acts. We’re talking programs. We’re talking the continual blurring of distinctions between the domestic and the foreign, the civilian and the military, between liberties at home and “securing the Homeland.” The problem is, we can only guess at the extent of that “securing” process because so much is clearly happening just beyond our sight (or oversight).

Below, in the first of a two-part series, Nick Turse, who follows the military-corporate complex regularly for Tomdispatch, offers as solid a sense as we are likely to get right now of the outlines of the new Homeland Security State being created within the bounds of the

old republic. Let's face it, this is frightening stuff, but too important not to read.

Tom

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## **Bringing It All Back Home:**

### **The Emergence of the Homeland Security State**

**By Nick Turse**

#### **Part I: The Military Half**

If you're reading this on the Internet, the FBI may be spying on you at this very moment.

Under provisions of the USA Patriot Act, the Department of Justice has been collecting e-mail and IP (a computer's unique numeric identifier) addresses, without a warrant, using trap-and-trace surveillance devices ("pen-traps"). Now, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Justice's principle investigative arm, may be monitoring the web-surfacing habits of Internet users — also without a search warrant — that is, spying on you with no probable cause whatsoever.

In the wake of September 11, 2001, with the announcement of a potentially never-ending "war on terror" and in the name of "national security," the Bush administration embarked on a global campaign that left in its wake two war-ravaged states (with up to one hundred thousand civilian dead in just one of them); an offshore "archipelago of injustice" replete with "ghost jails" and a seemingly endless series of cases of torture, abuse, and the cold-blooded murder of prisoners. That was abroad. In the U.S.A., too, things have changed as America became "the Homeland" and an already powerful and bloated national security state developed a civilian corollary fed by fear- mongering, partisan politics, and an insatiable desire for governmental power, turf, and budget.

A host of disturbing and mutually-reinforcing patterns have emerged in the resulting new Homeland Security State — among them: a virtually unopposed increase in the intrusion of military, intelligence, and "security" agencies into the civilian sector of American society; federal abridgment of basic rights; denials of civil liberties on flimsy or previously illegal premises; warrant- less sneak-and-peak searches; the wholesale undermining of privacy safeguards (including government access to library circulation records, bank records, and records of internet activity); the greater empowerment of secret intelligence courts (like the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act court) that threaten civil liberties; and heavy-handed federal and local law enforcement tactics designed to chill, squelch, or silence dissent.

While it's true that most Americans have yet to feel the brunt of such policies, select groups, including Muslims, Arab immigrants, Arab-Americans, and anti-war protesters, have served as test subjects for a potential Homeland Security juggernaut that, if not stopped, will only expand.

#### **The Military Brings It All Back Home**

Over the past few years we've become familiar with General John Abizaid's Central

Command (CENTCOM) whose “areas of responsibility” (AORs) stretch from the Horn of Africa to Central Asia, including, of course, the Iraq war zone. Like CENTCOM, the U.S. has other commands that blanket the rest of the world, including the Pacific Command (PACCOM, established in 1947) and the European Command (EURCOM, established in 1952). In 2002, however, the Pentagon broke new command ground by deciding, after a fashion, to bring war to the Homeland. It established the U.S. Northern Command (NORTHCOM) whose AOR is “America’s homefront.”

NORTHCOM is much more forthright about what it supposedly doesn’t do than what it actually does. Its website repeatedly, in many forms, notes that NORTHCOM is not a police auxiliary and that the Reconstruction-era Posse Comitatus Act prevents the military from meddling much in domestic affairs. Despite this, NORTHCOM readily, if somewhat vaguely, admits to “a cooperative relationship with federal agencies” and “information-sharing” among organizations. NORTHCOM’s commander General Ralph “Ed” Eberhart, who, the Wall Street Journal notes, is the “first general since the Civil War with operational authority exclusively over military forces within the U.S.,” was even more blunt when he told PBS’s Newshour “[W]e are not going to be out there spying on people[, but] we get information from people who do.”

Even putting NORTHCOM aside, the military has recently been creeping into civilian life in all sorts of ways. Back in 2003, for instance, Torch Concepts, an Army sub-contractor, was given JetBlue’s entire 5.1 million passenger database, without the knowledge or consent of those on the list, for data-mining — a blatant breach of civilian privacy that the Army nonetheless judged not to violate the federal Privacy Act. Then, in 2004, Army intelligence agents were caught illegally investigating civilians at a conference on Islam at the University of Texas law school in Austin.

And just recently, on the very same day the Washington Post reported that “the Pentagon... [has] created a new espionage arm and is reinterpreting U.S. law to give Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld broad authority over clandestine operations abroad,” the New York Times reported that, as part of the “extraordinary army of 13,000 troops, police officers and federal agents marshaled to secure the [Presidential] inauguration,” the Pentagon had deployed “super-secret commandos... with state-of-the-art weaponry” in the nation’s capitol. This was done under government directives that undercut the Posse Comitatus Act of 1878. According to the Times, the black-ops cadre, based out at the ultra-secretive Joint Special Operations Command at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, is operating under “a secret counterterrorism program code-named Power Geyser,” a program just recently brought to light in *Code Names*, a new book by a former intelligence analyst for the Army, William M. Arkin, who says that the “special-mission units [are being used] in extra-legal missions...in the United States” on the authority of the Department of Defense’s Joint Staff and with the support of the DoD’s Special

### **Operations Command and NORTHCOM.**

Courtesy of the New Yorker’s Seymour Hersh, we’ve known for some time of the creation of “a secret unit that was given advance approval to kill or capture and interrogate ‘high-value’ suspects...” in the name of the War on Terror. Some of us may have even known that since 1989, in the name of the War on Drugs, there has been a multi-service command, (comprised of approximately 160 soldiers, sailors, marines, airmen and Department of Defense operatives) known as Joint Task Force Six (JTF-6), providing “support to federal,

regional, state and local law enforcement agencies throughout the continental United States.” Now, we know as well that there are an unknown number of commando squads operating in the U.S — in the name of the war at home. Just how many and exactly what they may up to we cannot know for sure since spokespersons for the relevant Army commands refuse to offer comment and Pentagon spokesman Bryan Whitman will only say that “At any given time, there are a number of classified programs across the government” and that Power Geyser “may or may not exist.” The emergence of an American Homeland Security State has allowed the Army to fundamentally alter its historic role, transforming what was once illegal and then exceptional — deploying Federal troops in support of (or acting as) civilian law enforcement agencies — into standard operating procedure. But the Army is not alone in its homefront meddling. While the Army was thwarted in its attempt to strong-arm University of Texas officials into releasing a videotape of their conference on Islam, the Navy used arm twisting to greater effect on a domestic government agency. The Wall Street Journal reports that, in 2003, the Office of Naval Intelligence badgered the U.S. Customs Service to hand over its database on maritime trade. At first, the Custom’s Service resisted the Navy’s efforts, but in the post-9/11 atmosphere, like other agencies on the civil side of the ledger, it soon caved to military pressure. In an ingenuous message sent to the Wall Street Journal, the commissioner of the Department of Homeland Security’s Bureau of Customs and Border Protection, Robert C. Bonner, excused handing over the civilian database by stating that he had received “Navy assurances that the information won’t be abused.”

While the Army, Navy, and NORTHCOM naturally profess to having no nefarious intent in their recent civil-side forays, history suggests wariness on the subject. After all, the pre-Homeland-Security military already had a long history of illegal activity and illegal domestic spying (much of which came to light in the late 1960s and early 1970s) — and never suffered social stigma, let alone effectual legal or institutional consequences for its repeated transgressions. NORTHCOM now proudly claims that it has “a cooperative relationship with federal agencies working to prevent terrorism.” So you might wonder: Just which other “federal agencies” does NORTHCOM — which shouldn’t be sharing information about American civilians with anyone — share information with? The problem is, the range of choices in the world of American intelligence alone is staggering. If you’ve read (or read about) the 9/11 Commission Report, you may have seen the now almost iconic figure of 15 military and civilian intelligence agencies bandied about. That in itself may seem a startling total for the nation’s intelligence operations, but, in addition to the CIA, DIA, NSA, FBI and others in the “big 15” of the U.S. Intelligence Community (IC), there exist a whole host of shadowy, half-known, and little understood, if well-acronymed, intelligence/military/security-related offices, agencies, advisory organizations, and committees such as the Counterintelligence Field Activity (CIFA), the Defense Airborne Reconnaissance Office (DARO), the President’s Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board (PFIAB) and the President’s Intelligence Oversight Board (IOB); the Department of Defense’s own domestic cop corps, the Pentagon Force Protection Agency (PFPA); and the Intelligence’s Community’s internal watchdog, the Defense Security Service (DSS).

Think of these various arms of intelligence and the military as the essential cast of characters in our bureaucratically proliferating Homeland Security State where everybody, it seems, is eager to get in on the act. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the operations center of the Department of Homeland Security. In its horse-shoe shaped war-room, the “FBI, the CIA, the Secret Service, and 33 other federal agencies each has its own workstation. And so do the police departments of New York, Los Angeles, Washington and

six other major cities.” In the operations center, large signs on walls and doors command: “Our Mission: To Share Information”; and, to facilitate this, in its offices local police officers sit just “a step or two away from the CIA and FBI operatives who are downloading the latest intelligence coming into those agencies.” With all previous lines between domestic and foreign, local and federal spying, policing, and governmental oversight now blurring, this (according to outgoing Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge) is “the new model of federalism” in action.

>From the military to local governments, from ostensibly civilian federal agencies to obscure counter-intelligence organizations, they’re all on the make, creating interagency alliances, setting up new programs, expanding their powers, gearing up operations and/or creating “Big Brother” technologies to more effectively monitor civilians, chill dissent, and bring the war back home. Right now, nothing is closer to the heart of Homeland Security State officials (and to their budgetary plans) than that old standby of dictatorships and oppressive regimes worldwide, surveillance — by and of the Homeland population. In fact, almost every day, new examples of ever- hopeful surveillance programs pop up. Of course, as yet, we only have clues to the well-classified larger Homeland surveillance picture, but even what we do know of the growing public face of surveillance in America should cause some eyes to roll. Here’s a brief overview of just a few of the less publicized, but mostly public, attempts to ramp up the eye-power of the Homeland Security State.

Saying NCIX A little known member of the alphabet soup of federal agencies is the Office of the National Counterintelligence Executive (more familiarly known by the unpronounceable acronym NCIX) — an organization whose main goal is “to improve the performance of the counterintelligence (CI) community in identifying, assessing, prioritizing and countering intelligence threats to the United States.” To accomplish this task, NCIX now offers that ultimate necessity for Homeland security, downloadable “counterintelligence and security awareness posters.” One features the text of the 1st Amendment to the Constitution (“...Congress shall make no law... prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech...”) and the likeness of Thomas Jefferson, but with a new addendum which reads: “American freedom includes a responsibility to protect U.S. security — leaking sensitive information erodes this freedom.”

Another NCIX poster might come straight out of the old Soviet East Germany: “America’s Security is Your Responsibility. Observe and Report.” While NCIX is an obscure agency, its decision to improve on the 1st Amendment and a fundamental American freedom is indicative of where our Homeland Security State is heading; and the admonition to “Observe and Report” catches its spirit exactly.

Every Wo/Man a G-Man Prior to the Republican National Convention in New York City, the Federal Bureau of Investigation sent agents across the country in what was widely seen as a blatant attempt to harass, intimidate, and frighten potential protesters. The FBI however countered by professing that “we have always followed the rules, sensitive to Americans’ constitutional rights to free speech and assembly, always drawing the line between lawfully protected speech and illegal activity.”

By the fall of 2004, however, FBI spokespeople had moved on from such anodyne reassurances and, in conjunction with the Department of Homeland Security, the bureau was launching its “October Plan.” According to a CBS news report, this program consisted of “aggressive — even obvious — surveillance techniques to be used on... people suspected of being terrorist sympathizers, but who have not committed a crime” while “[o]ther ‘persons



of interest,' including their family members, m[ight] also be brought in for questioning..." While harassing citizens at home, the FBI, which can't set up a successful internal computer system of its own (despite squandering at least \$170 million on the project), began dabbling in overseas e- censorship, by confiscating servers in the United Kingdom from Indymedia, the activist media network website "with apparently no explanation." As Ward Harkavy reported in the Village Voice, "The network of activists has not been accused of breaking any laws. But all of the material actually on some of its key servers and hard disks was seized." More recently, the creator of an open-source tool designed to help internet security experts scan networks, services, and applications says he's been "pressured" by the FBI for copies of the web server log that hosts his website.

In addition to intimidation tactics and tech-centric activities, the FBI has apparently been using Joint Terrorism Task Forces (teams of state and local law enforcement officers, FBI and other federal agents) as well as local police to conduct "political surveillance" of environmental activists as well as anti-war and religious-based protest groups. The bureau is also eager to farm out such work to ordinary Americans and has been calling on the public to do some old- fashioned peeping through the blinds, just in case the neighbors are up to "certain kinds of activities [that] indicate terrorist plans that are in the works."

Into the Wild Blue Yonder Strange as it may seem, the Air Force has also gotten into the local surveillance act as well with an "Eagle Eyes" anti-terrorism initiative which "enlists" average citizens in the "war on terror." The Eagle Eyes' website tells viewers: "You and your family are encouraged to learn the categories of suspicious behavior" and it exhorts the public to drop a dime to "a network of local, 24-hour phone numbers... whenever a suspicious activity is observed." Just what, then, constitutes "suspicious activity"? Well, among activities worth alerting the flying eagles to, there's the use of cameras (either still or video), note taking of any sort, making annotations on maps, or using binoculars (birdwatchers beware!). And what other patterns of behavior does the Air Force think should send you running to the phone? A surefire indicator of terrorists afoot: "Suspicious persons out of place.... People who don't seem to belong in the workplace, neighborhood, business establishment, or anywhere else." Just ponder that one for a moment — and, if you ever get lost, be afraid, very afraid...

While the Air Force does grudgingly admit that "this category is hard to define," it offers a classic you-know-it-when-you-see-it definition for calling your local eagle: "The point is that people know what looks right and what doesn't look right in their neighborhoods, office spaces, commutes [sic], etc, and if a person just doesn't seem like he or she belongs..." An... ahem... urban looking youth in a suburban white community? Call it in! A crusty punk near Wall Street? Drop a dime! A woman near the White House wearing an anti-war t-shirt. Well, that's an out-of-category no-brainer! And, in fact, much of this has already begun to come true. After all, "suspicious persons out of place" now do get arrested in the new Homeland Security State for such offenses as wearing anti-Bush t- shirts, carrying anti-Bush signs or just heckling the president. Today, even displaying an anti-Bush sticker is, in the words of the Secret Service, apparently "borderline terrorism." Holding a sign that reads, "This war is Bushit," warrants a citation from the cops and, as an eleven year old boy found out, the sheriff might come calling on you if you utter "anti-American" statements — while parents may be questioned by law enforcement officials to ascertain if they're teaching "anti-American values" at home.

[Tune in Monday, same Tom-Time, same Tom-Channel for Part II of this dispatch: the view from the civilian side of the Homeland Security State] Nick Turse is a doctoral candidate at

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