

“Counter-Terrorism” Gone Crazy: Copyright Infringement Is Being Treated as Terrorism

By [Washington's Blog](#)

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Counter-Terrorism Gone Crazy

Top American security experts say that using “anti-terror” powers to go after non-terrorism related activities [hurts our national security](#).

A good example is copyright infringement.

The Patriot Act has been invoked in connection with copyright infringement ... such as by [a fan of the tv show Stargate SG-1](#).

CNET [reported](#) in 2005:

Terrorist link to copyright piracy alleged

Counterfeit DVDs and cigarettes may be funding terrorists.

That’s what the Senate Homeland Security committee heard Wednesday from John Stedman, a lieutenant in the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department who’s responsible for an eight-person team of intellectual property (IPR) investigators.

“Some associates of terrorist groups may be involved in IPR crime,” Stedman said.

Even though Stedman’s evidence is circumstantial, his testimony comes as Congress is expected to consider new copyright legislation this year. An invocation of terrorism, the trump card of modern American politics, could ease the passage of the next major expansion of copyright powers.

Security expert Bruce Schneier [noted](#) in 2005:

The European music industry is [lobbying](#) the European Parliament, demanding things that the RIAA can only dream about:

The music and film industries are demanding that the European parliament extends the scope of proposed anti-terror laws to help

them prosecute illegal downloaders. In an open letter to MEPs, companies including Sony BMG, Disney and EMI have asked to be given access to communications data – records of phone calls, emails and internet surfing – in order to take legal action against pirates and filesharers. Current proposals restrict use of such information to cases of terrorism and organised crime.

Wired [wrote](#) in 2008:

Attorney General Michael Mukasey talked tough on intellectual property crime, telling Silicon Valley executives here Friday that the theft of their inventions poses a threat to the nation's "health and safety" and fosters terrorism.

The Rand Corporation – a think tank closely linked to the U.S. military – published a [report](#) in 2009 linking the proceeds of infringement (of films) with funding of terrorist groups.

The executive director of the Information Society Project at Yale Law School [said](#) last year:

This administration ... publishes a newsletter about its efforts with language that compares copyright infringement to terrorism.

And we noted in February that the "cyber-security" laws have [very little to do with security](#). (And [see this](#).)

The Verge [reported](#) in February:

In the State of the Union address Tuesday, President Obama [announced](#) a sweeping executive order implementing new national cybersecurity measures, opening the door for intelligence agencies to share more information about suspected "cyber threats" with private companies that oversee the nation's "critical infrastructure." The order is voluntary, giving companies the choice of whether or not they want to receive the information, and takes effect in four months, by June 12.

"Cyber threats cover a wide range of malicious activity that can occur through cyberspace," wrote Caitlin Hayden, spokeswoman for the White House National Security Council, in an email to The Verge. "Such threats include web site defacement, espionage, theft of intellectual property, denial of service attacks, and destructive malware."

[Swat teams have been deployed](#) against copyright infringers. (And – ironically – the [NSA sent a copyright take down notice](#) to a small t-shirt maker using its "Prism" logo).

Helping "Friends"

But this really has *nothing* to do with terrorism.

As we've noted for years, the government is using [anti-terror laws to help "too big to fail" companies](#). U.S. intelligence agencies have also given information gained through spying [to a handful of giant corporations](#) for many years. This trend is [accelerating](#).

Security expert Bruce Schneier [pointed out](#) in 2005:

Our society definitely needs a serious conversation about the fundamental freedoms we are sacrificing in a misguided attempt to keep us safe from terrorism. It feels both surreal and sickening to have to defend our fundamental freedoms against those who want to stop people from sharing music. How is it possible that we can contemplate so much damage to our society simply to protect the business model of a handful of companies?

Glynn Moody [wrote](#) in 2010:

I've noted several times an increasingly popular trope of the intellectual monopolists: since counterfeiting is often linked with organised crime, and because counterfeiting and copyright infringement are vaguely similar, it follows as surely as night follows day that copyright infringement is linked with organised crime.

Well, maybe between organised crime and counterfeiting, but I challenge anyone to provide evidence that it's linked to infringements of copyright ("piracy").

In other words, a company which *counterfeits* large volumes of fake products might have some link to organized crime (although terrorism is less likely). But someone *downloading* content at home from the Internet – or posting something on their website – probably *doesn't*.

Boing Boing [reported](#) in 2011:

Piracy doesn't fund the mob or terrorists

A scholarly report funded by the Canadian government and the Ford Foundation investigates the alleged link between copyright infringement and terrorism and finds none.

America Mimics Russia, China and Iran

Treating copyright infringement like terrorism *isn't* just an effort to help the giant content producers, like the big movie and music studios.

Unfortunately, the American government is also using copyright laws to crack down on political dissent [just like China, Russia and Iran](#).

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