

Senate Moves Forward on Orwellian “Violent Radicalization and Homegrown Terrorism Prevention Act”

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In the wake of Senator Joseph Lieberman (I-CT) and Susan Collins' (R-ME) alarmist [report](#), “Violent Islamist Extremism, the Internet, and the Homegrown Terrorism Threat,” the Senate may be moving towards passage of the Orwellian “Violent Radicalization and Homegrown Terrorism Prevention Act of 2007” (S. 1959).

A companion piece of legislative flotsam to the House bill, “The Violent Radicalization and Homegrown Terrorism Prevention Act of 2007” (H.R. 1955), the Democrat-controlled Congress seems ready to jettison Constitutional guarantees of free speech and assembly. The bill passed the House by a 404-6 vote in October. Twenty-three congress members abstained, including House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and House Judiciary Chairman John Conyers.

Under cover of studying “violent radicalization,” both bills would broaden the already-fluid definition of “terrorism” to encompass political activity and protest by dissident groups, effectively criminalizing civil disobedience and non-violent direct action by developing policies for “prevention, disruption and mitigation.”

Call it [COINTELPRO](#) 2.0.

Crafted by former House Intelligence Committee Chairwoman Jane Harman (D-CA), the legislation would create a domestic commission, a university-based “Center of Excellence” that would study and then, target domestic “radicalization” as a “threat” to the “homeland.”

David Price, a professor of anthropology at St. Martin's University who studies state surveillance and the harassment of dissident scholars, told Jessica Lee of New York's [Independent](#) newspaper last year that Harman's bill “is a shot over the bow of environmental activists, animal-rights activists, anti-globalization activists and scholars who are working in the Middle East who have views that go against the administration.”

Evoking disquieting memories of political witchhunters ensconced in the House Committee on Un-American Activities and Senator Joseph McCarthy's Senate Subcommittee on Investigations, the anti-radicalization commission would be empowered to “hold hearings and sit and act at such times and places, take such testimony, receive such evidence, and administer such oaths as the Commission considers advisable to carry out its duties.”

With the power to subpoena and compel testimony from anyone, the commission would

create the (intended) impression that a person forced to publicly testify before a congressionally mandated star chamber must be involved in “subversive” or illegal activities.

According to [Naomi Spencer](#),

The commission would be composed of appointees, one chosen each respectively by Bush, Homeland Security secretary Michael Chertoff, the Senate and House majority and minority leaders, and by the ranking majority and minority members of the two congressional homeland security committees. Such a selection process would certainly result in an extremely right-wing panel. (“US House passes Democrat-crafted ‘homegrown terrorism prevention’ legislation,” World Socialist Web Site, 1 December 2007)

When one considers that elite consensus favoring “muscular” strategies for fighting “terror”-homegrown or otherwise-emerge during a period when the Bush regime has illegally wiretapped phone calls, sifted e-mails, spied on political and religious organizations, and conducted extensive data mining of financial and other personal records, it becomes clear that the corporate police state is shifting into high-gear in a desperate move to criminalize ideological “thought crimes.”

The intent of the proposed legislation, however, goes far beyond an academic exercise. According to Jessica Lee, Harman stated that “the National Commission [will] propose to both Congress and [Department of Homeland Security Secretary Michael] Chertoff initiatives to intercede before radicalized individuals turn violent.”

In the context of the post-Constitutional “New Normal” paradigm, Harman and her acolytes evoke images of Philip K. Dick’s Department of Precrime in his dystopian novella, *The Minority Report*. Only here, in the bizarro world of outsourced “homeland security,” mutant precogs are replaced by high-end-and taxpayer funded-data-miners, psychological profilers and social network analysts in the employ of dodgy security firms linked to America’s military-intelligence complex.

The legislation specifically singles out the Internet as a “weapon” for domestic radicalization. When she introduced her bill to the Senate last November, Harman remarked, “There can be no doubt: the Internet is increasingly being used as a tool to reach and radicalize Americans and legal residents.”

Equating America’s web-surfacing habits with the threat of ideological infection by Islamist pod-people, Harman avers that the Internet allows Americans “to become indoctrinated by extremists and to learn how to kill their neighbors ... from the comfort of their own living rooms.”

(Britney, Paris, better move over... there’s a new truck-bombing instructional posted over on YouTube! OMG!)

Harman’s ludicrous pronouncement is considerably ramped-up by the Lieberman and Collins report, based on-what else- “expert testimony” during hearings held by the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

Lieberman and Collins claim that,

...the report assesses the federal government's response to the spread of the violent Islamist message on the Internet and concludes that there is no cohesive and comprehensive outreach and communications strategy in place to confront this threat. The report does not discuss relevant classified tools and tactics employed by the law enforcement and intelligence communities, but does recognize that there is no plan to harness all possible resources including adopting new laws, encouraging and supporting law enforcement and the intelligence community at the local, state, and federal levels, and more aggressively implementing an outreach and counter-messaging campaign on the Internet and elsewhere.

In other words, "independent" Democrat Lieberman and "maverick Republican" Collins are proposing new "tools" for regulating the Internet through a counter-propaganda campaign that would create "message force multipliers" that "support law enforcement" initiatives to crush the radical "threat."

By targeting the Internet, House and Senate thought police claim that "the Internet has aided in facilitating violent radicalization, ideologically based violence, and the homegrown terrorism process in the United States by providing access to broad and constant streams of terrorist-related propaganda to United States citizens."

But as the American Civil Liberties Union [wrote](#) last week,

Experience has demonstrated that in the event of a terrorist attack, the results of this report will likely be used to recommend the use of racial, ethnic and religious profiling. This will only heighten, rather than decrease, the spread of extremist violence. As an organization dedicated to the principles of freedom of speech, we cannot in good conscience support this report or any measure that might lead to censorship and persecution based solely on one's personal beliefs.

The ACLU is concerned that identifying the Internet as a tool for terrorists will lead to censorship and regulated speech — especially since the Internet has become an essential communications and research tool for everyone. Indeed, some policy makers have advocated shutting down objectionable websites in violation of the First Amendment. It is an unworkable solution. (American Civil Liberties Union, "ACLU Skeptical of Senate Report on "Homegrown" Terrorism," Press Release, May 8, 2008)

Precisely. But wait, there's more! Citing the New York City Police Department (NYPD) as "experts" in the area of "homegrown radicalism," the report avers:

After more than two years of research into homegrown terrorism cases in the United States and around the world, the New York City Police Department (NYPD) developed a model to explain how this core enlistment message, and the "jihadi-Salafi" ideology that provides the foundation for that message, drive the domestic radicalization process — transforming "unremarkable people" into terrorists.

Perhaps Lieberman and Collins should have consulted the family of [Sean Bell](#) as to the NYPD's "expertise" on analogous crime "modeling." Murdered by trigger-happy cops after a bachelor party the morning of his wedding, Bell's life was snuffed-out after he and his

friends were shot some 50 times. The cops-surprise!-were recently found “not guilty” on all counts by a New York judge.

We can dismiss senatorial allusions to NYPD’s acumen in the area of “counterterrorist analysis” with the contempt it deserves. But let’s be clear on one thing: the sole purpose of the “Violent Radicalization and Homegrown Terrorism Prevention Act” is to target the American people’s constitutionally-protected right to say No.

If the U.S. House and Senate care to examine the “root causes” of terrorism today, they need look no further than the on-going U.S. slaughter in Iraq-a “preemptive” war of choice to which they infamously gave their consent with eyes wide open.

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