

No Amnesty for Telecom Lawbreakers!

Editorial pages around the nation are weighing in:

The New York Times **Spies, Lies and FISA**

OCTOBER 14, 2007

As Democratic lawmakers try to repair a deeply flawed bill on electronic eavesdropping, the White House is pumping out the same fog of fear and disinformation it used to push the bill through Congress this summer. President Bush has been telling Americans that any change would deny the government critical information, make it easier for terrorists to infiltrate, expose state secrets, and make it harder “to save American lives.”

There is no truth to any of those claims. No matter how often Mr. Bush says otherwise, there is also no disagreement from the Democrats about the need to provide adequate tools to fight terrorists. The debate is over whether this should be done constitutionally, or at the whim of the president.

Los Angeles Times

Bush's chance to RESTORE credibility

The president should stop threatening to veto the RESTORE Act and acknowledge that his approach to terrorist surveillance was misguided.

OCTOBER 13, 2007

This week, two House committees made good on a Democratic promise to approve new privacy protections for Americans innocently caught up in the eavesdropping on suspected terrorists by the National Security Agency. But President Bush is threatening to veto the legislation. He is particularly aggrieved that it wouldn't provide retroactive immunity from lawsuits for telephone companies that cooperated with his so-called Terrorist Surveillance Program.

If Bush wants Congress to hold the telephone companies blameless, he should accept the legislation approved this week by the House Judiciary and Intelligence committees and make a full accounting of how — and on what supposed legal basis — the eavesdropping initiative was approved in the first place.



Immunity demand for telecoms raises questions *As history shows, mass snooping can sweep up innocent citizens.*

OCTOBER 22, 2007

Since Sept. 11, 2001, the Bush administration has repeatedly bypassed the special court set up to preserve balance. Now, with Congress threatening to restore some level of protection, the administration is insisting on legal immunity for telecommunications companies that might have turned over records improperly. Last week, a key Senate committee agreed.

The request alone is enough to raise suspicion, particularly given the nation's history.

In the 1960s and '70s when law enforcement and spy agencies launched mass snooping against U.S. citizens, some of the data ended up being used for nefarious purposes, such as IRS tax probes, that had nothing to do with protecting the nation.

That is the danger when an administration can tap into phone records without court oversight, and it is what's at issue now.

The administration has repeatedly bypassed the special national security court, arguing that the urgency of the war on terrorism justified its actions.

The Star-Ledger

No immunity for telecoms

OCTOBER 21, 2007

From the beginning of the debate over government wiretapping, the Bush administration has been adamant on two points. First, its warrantless surveillance of phone calls, e-mails and other digital data was legal. Second, the telecommunications companies that helped Washington's spying required immunity from lawsuits for their roles.

It doesn't take a conspiracy theorist to see the inconsistency in these points. If the program was legal, immunity is unnecessary.