



It's Time To Roll Back The Patriot Act

BY RICHARD PARKER
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AUSTIN, Texas — It's time. It's time for President Obama to live up to his own words. It's time for Congress to do its job. It's time to contract the ever-expanding national security state. And it's time to roll back the Patriot Act.

In Washington, elected officials are circling the wagons. The Obama administration claims that its Internet and telephone surveillance programs are legal; the ones we know about, indeed, are. Republicans who've never met a national security program they didn't love and key Democrats have closed ranks, arguing that the program has had many selected successes, many of them secret.

But just because something is legal and can be done does that mean that it should remain so and continue to be done? No. Laws are made and unmade all the time. And the argument that vast, dragnet-style surveillance has stopped terrorists at the lamentable expense of privacy is exactly the same argument that the Bush administration made about torture: better to sacrifice our principles and a few people in the hope of saving many.

But just because something is legal and can be done does that mean that it should remain so and continue to be done? No. Laws are made and unmade all the time. And the argument that vast, dragnet-style surveillance has stopped terrorists at the lamentable expense of privacy is exactly the same argument that the Bush administration made about torture: better to sacrifice our principles and a few people in the hope of saving many.

That was an argument that still isn't proven true, years after the fact. As disappointing is to see major liberal figures decide just to circle around their president, saying, "Well, he's our guy. We trust him." Even if he's your guy now he won't be your guy in 2017 and last I checked we were a nation of laws, not men. Bill Maher and Lawrence O'Donnell will likely regret their choice to become advocates as opposed to unflinching commentators.

Arguments aside, here is a fact: The Patriot Act, under which all of this surveillance is being justified, is set to expire in 2015. Congress extended it at the last minute and President Obama signed the extension into law in May 2011. After campaigning against the excesses of the previous administration, the president found it urgent enough to sign the extension using the White House auto pen just before midnight though he was in Paris himself.

The law vastly expanded surveillance in this country and abroad and provided police powers to a wide array of agencies on a wide array of fronts, from locking up undocumented immigrants to empowering the Federal Reserve Board of Governors to act as police agents in financial transactions. And, of course, it led to the expansion of widespread surveillance of phone records and Internet traffic, messages and content — to which nearly all of us blithely contribute.

As Colorado Sen. Mark Udall has said, Congress should now begin the process of reviewing the Patriot Act, well prior to its expiration. And it should do so in the most public manner possible. The intelligence community should not hide behind the old "sources and methods" apron but instead provide numbers, case studies and quantifiable results, even if they are reasonably sanitized. Every legal interpretation of the act should be open to scrutiny — not hidden by classification.

And the debate should be made entirely public, not unlike the Church hearings of 1975, which demonstrated that Watergate was not just a crime by political operatives but an inadvertent back door into of a vast domestic surveillance program by the nation's own intelligence, law enforcement and military agencies.

Besides, how accurate are these databases and algorithms, really? Consider two different groups being fairly, regularly and often mistakenly detained.

First there are pilots. In May, Gabriel Silverstein was detained not once but twice by the Department of Homeland Security as he flew his plane across the Midwest — with nary a reason given but a fruitless inspection by a drug dog thrown in to boot. All that he learned was the flight profile he willingly filed fit a profile in a database known as AMOSS, which tracks and analyzes 24,000 flights a day using both FAA and military radar. Other pilots have been similarly detained in South Carolina and Texas, all according to the radical Airline Owners and Pilots Association.

Second there are air travelers. Last year, one of the most famous actors in the world was detained: Indian cinema star Shah Rukh Khan was mistakenly held for two hours after landing aboard a private jet in White Plains, N.Y., en route to an event at Yale University where he was to receive an honorary fellowship. But not to be outdone, agents at Boston's Logan Airport mistakenly detained an Indian state official, carrying a diplomatic passport on his way to Harvard. A British traveler was turned away in Los Angeles for a Twitter message that while bizarre also indicated that he was to unearth the remains of Marilyn Monroe.

There is more at work here, though, than the mere accuracy of these programs. Big things always are open to big abuse. In 2008, ABC News reported that NSA was listening in on the private telephone conversations of none other than American soldiers in the Middle East. These intelligence efforts are so vast and intrusive it is unlikely that even the handful of informed members of Congress really understand them. The Canadian national and provincial governments have tried to stop U.S. agencies from seizing records in that country. And increasingly, Americans living abroad who have unpaid tax bills have their names entered into the TECS database by the IRS and are detained upon arrival by Homeland Security, according to yet another radical group — the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants.

Now, it's time for the intelligence community to make its case — in public. It's time for Congress to do its job. It's time for the president to live up to his pledge. And it's time to roll back the Patriot Act, repeal it — or just let it expire.

Richard Parker writes for the New York Times, The New Republic, the Columbia Journalism Review and McClatchy-Tribune. He is the author of "Unblinking: Rise of the Modern Superdrone," due out from Quayside Publishing, this fall.

Writer's Block

A Very Big Edge On Aging

BY WILLIAM KERR
For the Press & Dakotan

Some of you already know that "the Golden Years are not for wimps!" Those of you who are now in the "Golden Years" already know some of what I am going to share with you. Others who know some of us who are now enjoying the "Golden Years" may have a hint of some of the things I'm going to share with you, but the majority of you readers will find the material in this article mostly new to you.

It seems as if mother nature tries to put a "lid" on both the physical and mental activities of us elders, especially after we retire. That lid is made up of: L — Limitations; I — Inconveniences; and D — Discomforts.

I have been a very lucky guy in this life and it has extended even to this very day. I won't bore you with past evidence, but I was very lucky to be married to a woman (two years younger than I) who was willing to keep on working for two years so that I could retire at age 62 in 1988 (and that is one of the least of her many great qualities). And, until about three years ago, I continued to be relatively unaffected by mother nature's "LID."

But then I slipped on the ice while trying to salt it down, and fell sideways onto the brick steps of our home, damaging my right hip and knee muscles and cartilage. It required nearly a year for a complete recovery. After the first few months, I was not completely confined and could get around with a cane for short distances until it was completely healed.

Then in April 2011, I had pre-planned surgery to replace my right hip. (About 10 years back, my right knee was replaced. When you have both hands full of rifle and the bullets and shells start flying and you "hit the dirt," it's your knee that hits first and that shock it transmitted to your hip.) When I came home from the hip surgery, I was hit by a full-bore attack of myasthenia gravis, a rare disease which attacks the muscle receptors that receive directions from the brain so that the messages cannot get through and the muscles can't work right, if at all. After a few months, the medication began to reduce the



William KERR

symptoms so I could do some of the exercises for recovery from hip surgery. That, of course, delayed recovery from surgery.

Finally, we got an electric power chair and a van with a ramp so I could get around outside the house. Then, the shingles hit me. Down the road a piece, I had a urinary tract infection. Then, about three months ago, my left hip began to hurt when I walked. Turned out it did not need a replacement, as I had thought, but was caused by arthritis in my spine. I'm now undergoing physical therapy to relieve the pain in my left leg.

I mention all of these things only to show how effective an "edge" is in keeping a good balanced outlook when one is swamped by multiple difficulties.

The other day Lois (my truly wonderful wife) said to me, "you seem to handle all of your limitations and discomforts, and even pain, really well." I replied, "After the Battle of the Bulge, everything else is easier." If you survive infantry combat, you have that "edge" for the rest of your life. That is something you cannot buy.

That will give you some idea of the magnitude of the stress involved during infantry combat. Our military leaders are only now seeing it more clearly than ever before in its negative effect on our soldiers who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan.

I had my last "waking up screaming" dream, as I felt a bayonet being stuck into my gut, just 10 years ago. That's about 55 years after I was discharged from the Army. I still feel, at times, our bed tremble as if the whole house is shaking as it did in small towns and hamlets in Europe when German tanks rumbled down the street. This never is in dream form. It only happens when I am going to sleep, but have not reached full sleep. Because of that, I know now when it happens that it is only a tactile hallucination.

Isn't it great that something good can come from all of that terrible stress? Nobody would be crazy enough to go through infantry combat just to get that "edge." But, when you've been through it, it is neat that it produces such a helpful side effect.

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OPINION | OTHER THOUGHTS

Senate's Farm Bill Fails To Deliver

CHICAGO TRIBUNE (June 12): The Senate approved a nearly \$1 trillion farm bill Monday night that proves Washington is still bent on catering to special interests and wasting taxpayers' money.

Let's count the ways.

The Senate bill perpetuates a sugar subsidy that raises the price of sweets and shuts out foreign competition. Great for the sugar industry, terrible for consumers.

The bill creates a new sweetheart deal for the dairy industry: an insurance program that will drive up prices by triggering production cuts when there's an oversupply of product. Good for the dairy industry, terrible for consumers.

The bill perpetuates the vast government subsidies for crop insurance. The government will continue to pay more than half the cost of the insurance. Farmers get subsidized and get a perverse financial incentive to take excessive risks without having to worry if their crops fail. Taxpayers get gouged.

The bill largely spurns Obama administration efforts to reform the international food aid program. Most food will still be bought in the U.S. and shipped abroad, rather than be purchased where it will be consumed. That's good for U.S. growers and shippers, but drives up the cost to taxpayers and reduces the number of people who are fed.

The bill cuts \$4 billion over 10 years in the food-stamp program, but does little to deal with fraud in the program.

While the Senate bill promises \$24 billion in savings, including the elimination of \$5 billion a year in direct government payments to farmers, there's so much more potential here for reform.

Lawmakers like to say agriculture policy protects family farmers, but the beneficiaries are generally large agribusiness operators. ...

With less and less risk of bearing a loss, farmers have started planting what's known in the heartland as "corn-on-corn." Instead of rotating the crop in each field year by year, some farmers have been planting only corn. Corn last year. Corn this year. Corn next year.

That's poor stewardship, contrary to the critical goal of sustainability. ...

U.S. Rep. Collin Peterson of Minnesota, ranking Democrat on the House Agriculture Committee and a defender of crop insurance, recently struck a nerve when he admitted, "There is five times as much fraud in crop insurance than in food stamps."

The government should have no role in crop insurance for wealthy agribusinesses. The subsidy should be greatly scaled back to assist only those farmers who require help to obtain a reasonable level of emergency coverage.

The Senate has failed again to come up with a far-reaching farm bill. The House will take up its own version in the coming weeks. Congress, come on. Wean the agriculture industry off of welfare.

TODAY IN HISTORY

By The Associated Press
Today is Thursday, June 13, the 164th day of 2013. There are 201 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History: On June 13, 1983, the U.S. space probe Pioneer 10, launched in 1972, became the first spacecraft to leave the solar system as it crossed the orbit of Neptune.

On this date: In 1842, Queen Victoria became the first British monarch to ride on a train, traveling from Slough Railway Station to Paddington in 25 minutes.

In 1886, King Ludwig II of Bavaria drowned in Lake Starnberg.

In 1927, aviation hero Charles Lindbergh was honored with a ticker-tape parade in New York City.

In 1935, James Braddock claimed the title of world heavyweight boxing champion from Max Baer in a 15-round fight in Long Island City, N.Y.

In 1942, the first of two four-man Nazi sabotage teams arrived in the United States during World War II. (The eight were arrested after one of them went to U.S. authorities; six of the saboteurs were executed.)

In 1944, Germany began launching flying-bomb attacks against Britain during World War II.

In 1957, the Mayflower II, a replica of the ship that brought the Pilgrims to America in 1620, arrived at Plymouth, Mass., after a nearly two-month journey from England.

In 1966, the Supreme Court ruled in Miranda v. Arizona that criminal suspects had to be informed of their constitutional right to consult with an attorney and to remain silent.

In 1971, *The New York Times* began publishing excerpts of the Pentagon Papers, a secret study of America's involvement in Vietnam from 1945 to 1967 that had been leaked to the paper by military analyst Daniel Ellsberg.

In 1981, a scare occurred during a parade in London when a teenager fired six blank shots at Queen Elizabeth II.

In 1993, Canada's Progressive Conservative Party chose Defense Minister Kim Campbell to succeed Brian Mulroney as prime minister; she was the first woman to hold the post. Astronaut Donald K. "Deke" Slayton died in League City, Texas, at age 69.

In 1996, the 81-day-old Freeman stand-off ended as 16 remaining members of the anti-government group surrendered to the FBI and left their Montana ranch.

Ten years ago: U.S. forces killed 27 Iraqi fighters after the Iraqis attacked an American tank patrol north of Baghdad. Israel broadened its campaign against Palestinian militants, saying it would strike political as well as military leaders who targeted Israel with terrorism. Hundreds of pro-clerical militants and security forces in Tehran clashed with Iranians throughout the capital.

Five years ago: Tim Russert, moderator of NBC's "Meet the Press," died suddenly while preparing for his weekly broadcast; he was 58. Rising water from the Cedar River forced the evacuation of a hospital in downtown Cedar Rapids, Iowa; in Des Moines, officials issued a voluntary evacuation order for much of downtown and other areas bordering the Des Moines River. Pope Benedict XVI took President George W. Bush on a rare stroll through the lush grounds of the Vatican Gardens during the leaders' third visit together. R. Kelly was acquitted of all charges in his child pornography trial in Chicago, ending a six-year ordeal for the R&B superstar.

One year ago: Federal prosecutors dropped all charges against former Democratic vice-presidential candidate John Edwards after his corruption trial ended the previous month in a deadlocked jury. A Houston jury convicted a man of shooting to death his neighbor during a confrontation outside the neighbor's home two years earlier, rejecting his claim that he was within his rights under Texas' version of a stand-your-ground law. (Raul Rodriguez was later sentenced to 40 years in prison for killing Kelly Danaher.) Matt Cain pitched the 22nd perfect game in major league history and the first for the Giants, striking out a career-high 14 batters and getting help from two running catches to beat the Houston Astros 10-0.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Bob McGrath is 81. Artist Christo is 78. Magician Siegfried (Siegfried & Roy) is 74. Singer Bobby Freeman is 73. Actor Malcolm McDowell is 70. U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon is 69. Singer Dennis Locorriere is 64. Actor Richard Thomas is 62. Actor Jonathan Hogan is 62. Actor Stellan Skarsgard is 62. Comedian Tim Allen is 60. Actress Ally Sheedy is 51. TV anchor Hannah Storm is 51. Rock musician Paul deLisle (Smash Mouth) is 50. Actress Lisa Vidal is 48. Singer David Gray is 45. Rhythm-and-blues singer Deniece Pearson (Five Star) is 45. Rock musician Soren Rasted (Aqua) is 44. Actor Jamie Walters is 44. Singer-musician Rivers Cuomo (Weezer) is 43. Country singer Susan Haynes is 41. Actor Steve-O is 39. Country singer Jason Michael Carroll is 35. Actor Ethan Embry is 35. Actor Chris Evans is 32. Actress Sarah Schaub is 30. Singer Raz B is 28. Actress Kat Dennings is 27. Actress Mary-Kate Olsen is 27. Actress Ashley Olsen is 27.

Thought for Today: "The penalty of success is to be bored by people who used to snub you." — Viscountess Astor, American-born English politician (1879-1964).

FROM THE BIBLE

All the promises of God find their Yes in Him. 2 Corinthians 1:20. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis

YOUR LETTERS

Riverside Plaza

Mike Covey, Yankton
City engineer Kevin Kuhl and others have done so much to re-vitalize and spruce up our city with bike and walking trails, artistic statues, flowery streetlamps and a myriad of other beautification/renovation projects to make our town a more much pleasant and appealing place to live.

I had a suggestion for him a few years back: Move the gateway fountain from Third and Broadway to some place like lower Second and Capitol. Create a public plaza — like Rome and Trieste and most of the big and small European towns. It's a great way for folks to get together in the evening, relax and enjoy each other's company.

Mr. Kuhl explained it wouldn't be

feasible, but maybe we could build another fountain-type structure with lights water statues — around where the Northwestern substation is by the Ice House. And close that street at night to cars — make it a pedestrian zone; and a wonderful public meeting place for evening strolls, a game of chess or cards; or sitting around with a coffee or mug of beer and taking in the night air.

We Americans are too isolated from one another. We've no place to connect, to meet, to get to know one another. A public plaza would be perfect for that; and would benefit downtown business and tourist trade as well. The increase in revenue would likely cover building costs in no time. And it would do us all good to get out and greet each other more often.

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