



Technology & Science

- MSNBC HOME
- News
- Business
- Sports
- Tech · Science
- Living
- Travel
- Health
- TV News
- Opinions
- Weather · Local
- Shop@MSNBC
- MSN.com

Senate limits Pentagon 'data-mining'

Total Information Awareness program sparked privacy fears

By Declan McCullagh



WASHINGTON, Jan. 24 — The U.S. Senate on Thursday voted unanimously to slap restrictions on a controversial Pentagon data-mining program that critics say would amount to a domestic spying apparatus. By unanimous consent, the Senate inserted a moratorium on the program into a massive spending bill, which was approved by a 69-29 vote late Thursday.

E-MAIL THIS ✉

COMPLETE STORY ↘

ADVERTISING ON MSNBC

RESOURCE GUIDE

- eDiets Diet Center
- Shop at B&N.com
- Auctions at uBid
- Yellow Pages
- lavalife.com
- Where singles click
- MSN Broadband

Advertisement



FurReal Friends
eBay.com

The Hot Toy Picks are on eBay!

More Electronic toys



uBid



THE VOTE REPRESENTS AN unusual triumph of privacy concerns over the Bush administration's arguments that the Pentagon's Total Information Awareness (TIA) program would be useful for national security. If fully implemented, TIA would link databases from sources such as credit card companies, medical insurers and motor vehicle agencies in hopes of snaring terrorists.

Final passage of the moratorium is not certain, however. Because the House of Representatives' version of the omnibus appropriations bill does not include any limits on TIA, a conference committee will have the final say.

"There's the potential for some minor changes," a representative for Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., the amendment's author, said Thursday.

More from CNET News.com

- [Memory Upgrades](#)
- [GameSpot Complete](#)
- [Holiday Gifts](#)
- [Web Hosting](#)

Wyden's proposal prevailed over a more modest plan championed by Sen. Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa. Grassley's proposed amendment said only that TIA must not be used for "domestic intelligence or law enforcement purposes."

On the other hand, the Wyden amendment — co-sponsored by Democrats including Dianne Feinstein of California and Patrick Leahy of Vermont — bans TIA after two months unless Congress receives a detailed report or President George W. Bush decides that a halt would "endanger the national security of the United States."

Thereafter, if the Defense Department or any other executive branch agency wishes to release TIA to be used on American citizens, it must seek "specific authorization" from Congress. Exceptions are "lawful" military activities conducted overseas, or intelligence operations that target non-Americans inside or outside the United States.

Wyden said in a statement that "as originally proposed, the Total Information Awareness program is the most far-reaching government surveillance plan in history. The Senate has now said that this program will not be allowed to grow without tough congressional oversight and accountability, and that there will be checks on the government's ability to snoop on law-abiding Americans."

MORE LEGISLATION LIKELY

Privacy worries about the Pentagon system, funded by the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), came to a head this week after the FBI indicated it wanted to use TIA domestically

against U.S. citizens. In a letter to Grassley, Defense Department Inspector General Joseph Schmitz said the FBI is considering "possible experimentation with TIA technology in the future."

Sen. Russ Feingold, D-Wisc., said after the vote that he would continue to pursue a standalone bill that would also place restrictions on TIA.

In a statement posted last month on the TIA Web site, the Defense Department defended the project as privacy neutral.

"The DoD recognizes American citizens' concerns about privacy invasions," the statement said. "To ensure the TIA project will not violate the privacy of American citizens, the department has safeguards in place. In addition, (we) will research and develop technologies to protect the system from internal abuses and external threats. The goal is to achieve a quantum leap in privacy technology to ensure data is protected and used only for lawful purposes."

The TIA project became public in early 2002 when Bush chose Adm. John Poindexter, who was embroiled in the Iran-Contra scandal, to run DARPA's Information Awareness Office. But criticism of the project from privacy advocates and newspaper editorial pages has spiked in the last two months, with politicians becoming increasingly interested in TIA's details after the 108th Congress convened this month.

Groups like the U.S. Association for Computing Machinery, the professional association for computer scientists, had urged Congress to place limits on TIA. In a letter to the Senate on Thursday, ACM warned: "Because of serious security, privacy, economic and personal risks associated with the development of a vast database surveillance system, we recommend a rigorous, independent review of these aspects of TIA."

*Copyright © 1995-2003 CNET Networks, Inc.
All rights reserved*

Advertisement



Add local news and
weather to the MSNBC
home page.

MORE STORIES FROM CNET NEWS.COM

- INTERNET** Enterprise
- INTERNET** E-Business
- INTERNET** Communications
- INTERNET** Media
- INTERNET** Personal Tech

TECHNOLOGY & SCIENCE TOP STORIES

- STORY** Internet worm slows to a crawl
- STORY** Retailers form digital music consortium
- STORY** Melting Arctic ice to open ship route
- STORY** Overhaul of EU space program urged
- STORY** Breaking down the .Net barriers
- HOME** MSNBC Cover Page

MSNBC READERS' TOP 10

Would you recommend this story to other readers?

not at all **1** - **2** - **3** - **4** - **5** - **6** - **7** highly

BACK TO TOP ↑



MSNBC is optimized for

- Microsoft Internet Explorer
- Windows Media Player

- **MSNBC Terms, Conditions and Privacy © 2003**

Cover | News | Business | Sports | Local News | Health | Technology & Science | Living | Travel
 TV News | Opinions | Weather | Comics

InfoCenter | Newsletters | Search | Help | News Tools | Jobs | Write Us | Terms & Conditions | Privacy

MSN - More Useful Everyday

[MSN Home](#) | [My MSN](#) | [Hotmail](#) | [Search](#) | [Shopping](#) | [Money](#) | [People & Chat](#)

©2002 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved. [Terms of Use](#) [Advertise](#) [Truste Approved](#) [Privacy Statement](#) [GetNetWise](#)