

In recent years, especially since 9/11, Congress has been totally negligent in its duty to protect U.S. citizens from Federal Government encroachment on the rights of privacy. Even prior to 9/11, the Echelon worldwide surveillance system was well entrenched, monitoring all telephones, faxes, and e-mails.

From the 1970s forward, national security letters were used sparingly in circumventing the legal process and search warrant requirements. Since 9/11 and the subsequent passage of the PATRIOT Act, however, the use of these instruments has skyrocketed from 300 annually to over 30,000. There is essentially no oversight nor understanding by the U.S. Congress of the significance of this pervasive government surveillance. It is all shrugged off as necessary to make us safe from terrorism. Sacrificing personal liberty and privacy, the majority feels, is no big deal.

We soon will vote on the conference report reauthorizing the PATRIOT Act. Though one would argue there has been a large grass-roots effort to discredit the PATRIOT Act, Congress has ignored this message. Amazingly, over 391 communities and seven States have passed resolutions highly critical of the PATRIOT Act.

The debate in Congress, if that is what one wants to call it, boils down to whether the most egregious parts of the act will be sunsetted after 4 years or 7 years. The conference report will adjust the numbers, and Members will vote willingly for the "compromise" and feel good about their effort to protect individual privacy.

But if we are honest with ourselves, we would admit that the fourth amendment is essentially a dead letter. There has been no effort to curb the abuse of national security letters nor to comprehend the significance of Echelon. Hard-fought liberties are rapidly slipping away from us.

Congress is not much better when it comes to protecting against the erosion of the centuries-old habeas corpus doctrine. By declaring anyone an enemy combatant, a totally arbitrary designation by the President, the government can deny an individual his right to petition a judge or even speak with an attorney. Though there has been a good debate on the insanity of our policy of torturing prisoners, holding foreigners and Americans without charges seems acceptable to many. Did it never occur to those who condemn torture that unlimited detention of individuals without a writ of habeas corpus is itself torture, especially for those who are totally innocent? Add this to the controversial worldwide network of secret CIA prisons now known of for 2 years and we should be asking ourselves what have we become as a people. Recent evidence that we are using white phosphorus chemical weapons in Iraq does nothing to improve our image.

Our prestige in the world is slipping. The war is going badly. Our financial

system is grossly overburdened, and we spend hundreds of hours behind the scenes crafting a mere \$5 billion spending cut while pretending no one knows we can spend tens of billions in off-budget supplemental bills, sometimes even under unanimous consent.

It is time we consider the real purpose of government in a society that professes to be free: protection of liberty, peaceful commerce, and keeping itself out of our lives, our economy, our pocketbooks, and certainly out of the affairs of foreign nations.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SIMPSON). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. DEFAZIO. addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

#### IRAQ

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take my Special Order at this time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Washington?

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. McDERMOTT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, when it comes to Iraq, the President and his administration continue to act like cowboys in a western movie. When will they learn? And until they do, there will be no solution in Iraq.

The President stampeded the American people into a flawed, futile, and fatal war; and this administration keeps applying B-movie mentality to real-life suffering. We have taken sides in a war-torn nation, inadvertently backing the Kurds and Shiites to the detriment of the Sunnis.

This is not some clan fight on a movie set that will get solved with a new sheriff riding into town proclaiming peace and progress. But that is what the administration's current strategy seems to be. Despite demands by Iraqi Sunni leaders that American forces stop new military operations, the fighting continues unabated. And like Vietnam, the latest administration tactic is to announce body counts, as if that will promote confidence among the American people. That same tactic was used during Vietnam. It did not work then, and it will not work in Iraq. If anything, this latest tactic will only deepen American resentment to this war because the American people know they are only being told part of the story.

The Rumsfeld command is happy to announce the number of insurgents killed or captured, but they do not talk much about the innocent Iraqi civilians killed or wounded. They are not announcing those numbers every day.

Why not? If they killed or captured 80 insurgents, how many civilians were injured or wounded in the process? Why do they not tell us the whole story?

Iraq is an urban guerilla warfare, and our brave soldiers should not be fighting a house-to-house war that puts them in maximum danger all the time. There is no front line in Iraq because every road is the front, every house is the front, and every footstep is along the front line. There is no safe haven for our soldiers. Danger is everywhere no matter where they sleep, no matter what they eat, no matter how much they try to forget this war for even a moment.

And the administration calls this progress. The American people see it as a paralysis of leadership. The President stampeded the Congress into a do-or-die scenario, and now our soldiers keep dying in the wrong place at the wrong time and for the wrong reason.

When was the last time the President even mentioned Osama bin Laden, the terrorist who is supposed to have started this whole thing, this war on terror?

The White House has built an underground bunker to keep out reality. The truth cannot penetrate those walls of denial, fortified with Presidential speeches to carefully selected audiences. Now the President is beginning to say that he is not responsible for the war in Iraq. The record is clear, Mr. Speaker: this war was started by this President and his war cabinet. They got what they wanted. They got more than they can handle. And every new pronouncement from the White House bunker widens the gulf between administration rhetoric and Iraq reality.

Reality may be missing in action at the White House, but reality is front and center with the American people. Another Presidential speech with yet another spin on why the President wants this war will not do anything to stabilize Iraq, promote peace, or create democracy.

We are just learning about the latest catastrophe. Now American soldiers have to launch operations to uncover hundreds of Sunnis abused, tortured, and malnourished in a prison run by the people we put in power.

Imposing our will is a prescription for civil war and ethnic scandals in Iraq. Imposing a Western blueprint on a Middle Eastern culture will undermine any attempt at real peace. Iraq needs the benefit of a Middle Eastern solution, a cultural process that has worked for thousands of years. Many in the Middle East know this. Many have tried to tell us. But we will not listen. Their will, not ours, will define democracy in Iraq. If we are serious about an election in Iraq, we have to stop the provocations.

America is at a crossroads: stability or continued occupation of Iraq. The Rumsfeld command now admits American soldiers could be there for a decade or more. That is occupation, and nobody outside the administration favors it. Ten more years of house-to-