

THE WAR AGAINST TERRORISM

It's not spying, it's 'terrorist surveillance'

Bush attempts to ease public's NSA concerns

By KATHERINE SHRADER
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON

President Bush and his top national security advisers are trying to change the debate, and even the vocabulary, about the National Security Agency's controversial electronic monitoring program.

Don't call it domestic spying, they say. It's a terrorist-surveillance program. Americans have been uneasy

ANALYSIS

about the program since it was first disclosed last month. According to polls, slightly more than half think the government should first get a warrant before eavesdropping on people in the United States whose calls and e-mails the government believes involve al-Qaida.

Bush, along with the nation's top military intelligence officer and the attorney general, has made the case in a three-day pitch.

Gen. Michael V. Hayden, the

government's No. 2 intelligence official, tried to drive the point home using air travel.

"I've taken literally hundreds of domestic flights," Hayden said this week at the National Press Club.

"I have never boarded a domestic flight in the United States of America and landed in Waziristan," a Pakistani region where some think Osama bin Laden may be hiding.

With that in mind, Hayden said, calling the monitoring program domestic spying isn't accurate when the calls start or end in another country, for example, when al-Qaida's operations chief in Pakistan may have called someone in Maryland.

According to law, the rules and procedures for monitoring domestic communications apply even when only one end of the call is

on U.S. soil. That's why Bush signed a highly classified directive approving the program, and has to reapprove it every 45 days.

The renewed public case from Bush and his advisers comes more than a month after the monitoring program was revealed and puts one of the government's most secretive intelligence agencies in an unusual spot. Most NSA employees would prefer to toil with no notice at their Fort Meade, Md., campus, roughly 25 miles from the White House.

Yet, on Wednesday Bush stopped by to rally the 30,000 workers, at headquarters or worldwide by video. Reporters came along, but weren't allowed to listen to his speech.

"We must be able to quickly detect when someone linked to al-Qaida is communicating with

someone inside of America," Bush said afterward. "That's one of the challenges of protecting the American people."

Like Bush, Hayden and Attorney General Alberto Gonzales have sought to remind the nation of the morning of Sept. 11. They also have invoked bin Laden's message last week threatening the United States.

And they said the government is only interested in calls from suspected terrorists, not average Americans.

In the end, the issue may land in the gray areas of intelligence gathering.

Former CIA Director James Woolsey sides with the president, but recently said it's a close call.

"If anyone says it's a crystal clear issue one way or another, that is the only position I regard as wrong," Woolsey said.



AP PHOTO
Current Iraqi Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari is among four candidates chosen by a committee as a possibility for Iraq's next prime minister.

Shiites, Sunnis start up talks

Four nominees named for next prime minister

By QASSIM ABDUL ZAHRA
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

BAGHDAD, Iraq

Shiite leaders have launched talks with Sunni and Kurdish politicians on a national unity government, proposing four candidates to be the next prime minister, a Shiite official said Wednesday, nearly six weeks after Iraq's parliamentary elections.

The talks came amid a spate of sectarian violence, including the killing of prominent Sunni Arab cleric, Karim Jassim Mohammed, 39, that threatens to disrupt the forming of the new government.

The United Iraqi Alliance, the Shiite bloc that won the most seats in the Dec. 15 vote, started the talks on the new government Tuesday with the Iraqi Accordance Front, a group of prominent Sunni Arab parties, said Shiite lawmaker Baha al-Aaraji.

The alliance suggested four nominees to be the next prime minister in the government to be announced at the end of the negotiations, which could take weeks, said al-Aaraji, a supporter of radical Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr and a member of a seven-man committee forming Shiite political party.

The four include current Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari, Adil Abdul-Mahdi of the Supreme Council of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, nuclear physicist Hussein al-Shahrastani and Nadim al-Jabiri of the Fadhila party, a religious group whose leader was al-Sadr's late father, Grand Ayatollah Mohammed Sadiq al-Sadr.

The government negotiations follow heightened tensions in northern Baghdad, particularly the mainly Sunni Arab neighborhood of Toubji, where dozens of armed men dressed in Interior Ministry police uniforms killed three Sunni males and abducted more than 20 on Monday.

Sunni religious and political leaders have blamed Shiite-backed security services for the violence, demanding government action and urging Sunnis to defend themselves against future attacks.

A U.S. Marine also was killed by small-arms fire Tuesday in Karmah, west of Baghdad, the military said, raising the number of U.S. military personnel killed since the war began in 2003 to at least 2,236, according to an Associated Press count.

Iraq's small army

U.S., Allies, want stronger military, but not too strong

By JIM CRANE
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates

With American help, the Iraqi army is emerging as a lightly armed counterinsurgency force that may control more of the country than the U.S.-led coalition by this spring, U.S. military officials say.

But in coming years the Iraqi army will remain too weak to defend the country and reliant far into the future on America to guarantee Iraq's sovereignty, experts say.

"They're not going to be the 101st Airborne anytime soon," said U.S. Army Lt. Col. Fred Wellman, spokesman for the military transition command in Baghdad. "But in 2006, this is the year that the majority of Iraq will be secured by Iraqis."

Wellman said that could happen by spring.

But the Pentagon is also grappling with designing a force that assuages the worries of neighboring countries victimized by Saddam Hussein's military.

The dilemma for Washington, which wants to hand off its counterinsurgency duties and depart as soon as possible, is that a weak Iraqi army could leave U.S.



AP PHOTOS
Above: A U.S. military officer, right, from the 3rd Battalion, 2nd Division, hands a flag to local Iraqi forces of the 3rd Brigade 1st division, during a hand-over ceremony of a military base Wednesday in Mosul, Iraq. Below: Iraqi forces march during the ceremony.

forces providing security for Iraq for many years, as America has done for Japan since the end of World War II, said Mustafa Alani, a military analyst with the Gulf Research Center in Dubai.

The U.S.-dominated transition command is spending \$11.5 billion to build 10 Iraqi divisions encompassing 130,000 troops. Nine of them are light infantry units. One is a mechanized division armed with 77 ex-Soviet T-72 tanks.

Light infantry is the best force for the chief task at hand: defeating Iraq's guerrillas, Wellman said.

But if Iraq is to avoid domination by neighbors, especially Iran, Alani said Baghdad will eventually need a military at least twice as large as planned, with weapons that are not in the cards: artillery, attack aircraft and even ballistic missiles.

"Self-defense can't be done with the forces they're talking about," Alani said. "If America wants an independent Iraq that can stand on its own and prevent intervention, there's no option but to build an offensive capability."

There are no plans to provide Iraq with artillery or other heavy weapons.

"When are we going to give them missiles or big artillery pieces? They're fighting guerrillas who disappear like the wind. That's not an artillery fight," Wellman said.

In Kuwait, where Iraq's brutal 1990 invasion is a painful memory, leaders view any Iraqi military expansion with alarm, said Abdullah al-Shayji, a Kuwait University security expert.

"The more powerful Iraq becomes, the less secure we become," he said. "Iraq occupied Kuwait with 100,000 troops. It could do it again."



Jury convicts Indiana man of being a foreign agent

By RICK CALLAHAN
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

INDIANAPOLIS

A man accused of trying to sell the names of U.S. operatives and agents to Saddam Hussein's Iraqi regime for \$3 million was convicted Wednesday of six of the seven charges against him.

Shaaban Hafiz Ahmad Ali Shaaban, who blamed his troubles

on a twin who a brother testified did not exist, was convicted of charges including acting as an unregistered foreign agent, violating sanctions against Iraq, conspiracy and witness tampering.

Jurors deadlocked over whether he offered to sell U.S. secrets to Saddam's government.

Prosecutors said Shaaban, who is Palestinian, traveled to Baghdad in late 2002 and agreed to sell

U.S. intelligence secrets to Iraq for \$3 million. No evidence was presented during his trial, however, that he had access to that classified information.

U.S. District Judge John Tinder set sentencing for April 13 on the six convictions, and said he would seek a hearing sometime next week to discuss a retrial on the remaining count.

Shaaban, 53, could have faced

up to 65 years in prison if convicted of all seven counts.

Shaaban represented himself during his trial with the help of two standby public defenders, Mike Donahoe, an attorney who advised Shaaban during the trial, said an appeal is likely.

Shaaban was working as a truck driver and living near Indianapolis when he was arrested in March.

"There can be no higher priority than taking care of our troops ..."

Sen. Christopher Dodd, R-Conn.
On reimbursing soldiers

By LOLITA C. BALDOR
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON

Just 29 Army soldiers have sought reimbursement so far for body armor and other equipment they bought to protect themselves on the front lines.

The scant number of requests are largely for updated ceramic body armor and total just \$21,000. The Associated Press learned.

That is in contrast to Defense Department officials' predictions last year that the program could impose a financial burden on the military if people pressed for reimbursement for large amounts of protective gear.

Prodded by a new law and congressional pressure, Defense officials began the repayment program in October. Troops and their families had gained growing attention for complaints that soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan weren't getting vital pieces of body armor from the Pentagon. Hometown groups had begun raising money and sending armor to the troops.

Army Maj. Paul Cucuzzella, who runs the reimbursement program from his office at Fort Meade, Md., said interest is starting to pick up. He said inquiries have grown from one a day to up to a half dozen.

Others, though, are faulting the Defense Department, saying it has not aggressively publicized the program.

"There can be no higher priority than taking care of our troops. And since day one, and this is an incredible understatement, the Pentagon has either outright fought or slow-walked implementation of this law," said Sen. Christopher Dodd, D-Conn., who pushed for legislation on the reimbursement.

Retired Brig. Gen. Stephen Koper, president of the National Guard Association, said information on a military Web site last week misstated the cutoff date for purchases that qualified for the reimbursement as July 2004. It has since been extended to April 1.

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