

The Patriot Act:

Helpful in the War on Terror or a breach of Civil Liberties?

■ PRO ■

AMBER SEATON
EDITORIAL EDITOR

In response to the September 11 attacks, the Patriot Act was created to ensure the safety of U.S. citizens against terrorism. Although this was the main reason for the passing of the act, several Americans feel that the Patriot Act has gone too far by infringing on the First Amendment rights of Americans, which is one of the reasons that the act will go up for revote. However, the Patriot Act is vital to the security of the U.S., and without it, Americans will not be provided with the maximum amount of protection against other crimes or acts of terrorism committed against the U.S.

There are several reasons why the Patriot Act is so crucial to the security of Americans. The act enhances domestic security against terrorism. According to *nws.findlaw.com*, the Patriot Act provides what is known as the counterterrorism fund, which gives federal agencies, without fiscal year limitation, monetary assistance in investigating or prosecuting international or domestic terrorism. It also aids in the rebuilding of the operational capabilities of a facility that has been destroyed or damaged in the event of a terrorist attack. With both of these contributions, the Patriot Act ensures that American citizens will be provided with what is necessary to survive the threat of a possible terrorist attacks in the future.

In addition, the Patriot Act provides an expansion of the national electronic crime task force initiative, which is a coalition of industry, federal, state and local law enforcement all working together to fight against crime. "Thanks to the Patriot Act, we may deploy technology to track and develop cases against alleged terrorist operatives," said former Attorney General John Ashcroft to *news.com*. The Patriot Act also funds the technical support center at the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Both of these provisions will give the FBI more resources to help them accurately prevent, detect, and investigate various forms of electronic crimes, including possible terrorist attacks against critical infrastructures and financial payment systems. By providing so many tools like these, the FBI can more quickly detect and stop any possible terrosim threats. Also, the lives of all U.S. citizens will be

better and more thoroughly protected, which proves that the Act is necessary and critical to the well-being of all Americans.

Another way that the Patriot Act ensures the protection of American citizens is that it places great importance on the investigation of money laundering within the U.S. government. According to *news.findlaw.com*, Congress finds that money laundering, the financial fuel that permits terrorist groups to conduct and expand their operations to harm the safety and security of American citizens. Because it happens so often, the U.S. are more prone to many crimes especially terrorism. However, with so much importance being placed on the investigation of such a huge problem, less the Patriot Act will get rid of the risk of this happening, which is one less factor that can lead to another terrorist attack.

Along with ensuring homeland security and prohibiting money laundering, the Patriot Act enhances surveillance procedures. This means that the FBI has the authority to intercept wire, oral and electronic communications relating to terrorism, according to *news.findlaw.com*, which allows them to gain useful information that aids in stopping the attack before it happens. Although it is understandable that many people believe that the FBI having the ability to listen to their phone conversations is an invasion of privacy and is being abused by the FBI, but in reality the Patriot Act ensures protection of the country against another terrorist attack, which should be the main concern of all American citizens. "We believe the act to be completely consistent with the U.S. Constitution," said Ashcroft to *BBC News*.

While the Patriot Act is up for a revote and has caused major controversy among American citizens, the Patriot Act should continue to be enforced. With its many contributions including the counterterrosim fund, increased surveillance, and the promotion of more protection against money laundering, the Patriot Act thoroughly protects American citizens by hindering and intercepting threats of terrorism. Without this Act, America will lack many of the tools that it needs to combat terrorism and will be left to fend for themselves, with no security provided by the U.S.

What Is The Patriot Act?

The Patriot Act enhances the authority of U.S. law enforcement for the stated purpose of investigating potential terrorists acts in the U.S. and around the world.

Who Is Affected By The Patriot Act?

Everyone

■ CON ■

JOE MALONEY
CO-EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

After September 11, 2001, the focus of the American Government shifted from helping the American people towards ensuring the security of the U.S. borders while protecting the country from the threat of terrorism. These measures included passing legislation that allowed the to government to have the ability to have more access to the information of citizens in order to prevent terrorists from attacking the country again. The Patriot Act is one of these legislative initiatives which were passed shortly after September 11. As the Patriot Act Sunset Provisions come up for revote in the U.S. Congress, it is imperative that the politicians in Washington D.C. recognize that the legislation damages the privacy rights of the American people while justifying a major loss in liberty.

The Patriot Act was passed by the 107th Congress October 24, 2001. According to the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), the Patriot Act authorizes searches without probable cause. These searches are called "sneak and peek", in which investigators can enter a home or office, take pictures and seize items without a warrant. Additionally, the Patriot Act allows for the Attorney General to detain non-citizens without a trial if they feel that that person endangers national security. According to the ACLU, while some non-citizens can be a threat to national security, most are not an actual threat.

The Patriot Act is an assault on the fundamental freedoms that all Americans, even non-citizens should possess. The Patriot Act allows the government to access anyone's medical and tax records, information about the books that a person rents out, and the power to break into a home, according to the ACLU. While some may argue that sections of the Patriot Act are a good idea and prevent terrorism, this argument ignores the privacy violations that the Patriot Act justifies.

Not only are privacy rights being denied through the Patriot Act but the freedom of speech is being limited by the act. The gag order provisions of the Patriot Act prevent

journalists from keeping sources private and limit the freedom of the press, according to the ACLU. "It is really ridiculous. I am just waiting for the first search of a newsroom to come down and for someone to say 'You can't report we just searched you,'" said Executive Director of the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press Lucy Dalgish.

The Patriot Act has changed the way that the government works. Before September 11, the government had to justify most of its actions, but through the Patriot Act almost anything can be done, including detainment without charge and search without probable cause. "The Patriot Act has not been around for long, but it has already changed the political landscape. [Former] Attorney General John Ashcroft personally has signed more than 170 emergency foreign intelligence warrants, three times the number authorized in the preceding 23 years," said Associate Professor at the University of Texas Steven Best to the *Washington Post*. With this type of emphasis placed on security, it is important that the government does not go beyond the limited power that it has over its citizens and non-citizens.

It is important that the U.S. people recognize that the Patriot Act is a breach of privacy because the time to do so is running out. Not only can the original Patriot Act be renewed but there is the Patriot Act II. The new Patriot Act gives the government more authority to watch Americans and gather intelligence.

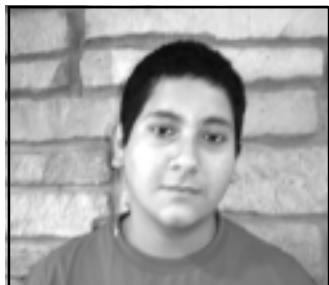
As the Patriot Act comes up for revote with its Sunset Provisions, it is imperative that the U.S. Congress recognize that while the act may prevent some terrorism, the cost of which comes at the expense of the liberty of the American people. Liberty is something that the U.S. was founded under because the colonists left England to escape from persecution. Only by checking the government at its most important levels would prevent the creation of a full security state. Benjamin Franklin puts this situation best with his quote on the Statue of Liberty: "Those that can give up a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty not safety."

DO YOU KNOW WHAT THE PATRIOT ACT IS?



Buki Ogundipe '07

Yes, the Patriot Act was created to provide homeland security for all American citizens.



Edgar Moncada '08

Yes, it came out right after September 11th. That's all I know.



Jessica Thompson '06

I know I learned it in U.S. History, but beyond that, I honestly can't remember.