Congress may inadvertently have passed in the rush to complete legislative business this year.

[New York Times, Nov. 14, 2002]

YOU ARE A SUSPECT

(By William Safire)

Washington—If the Homeland Security Act is not amended before passage, here is what will happen to you: Every purchase you make with a credit card, every magazine subscription you buy and medical prescription you fill, every Web site you visit and e-mail you send or receive, every academic grade you receive, every bank deposit you make, every trip you book and every event you attend—all these transactions and communications will go into what the Defense Department describes as ''a virtual, centralized grand database.''

To this computerized dossier on your private life from commercial sources, add every piece of information that government has about you—passport application, driver's license and bridge toll records, judicial and divorce records, complaints from nosy neighbors to the F.B.I., your lifetime paper trail plus the latest hidden camera surveillance—and you have the supersnoop's dream: a ''Total Information Awareness'' about every U.S. citizen.

This is not some far-out Orwellian scenario. It is what will happen to your personal freedom in the next few weeks if John Poindexter gets the unprecedented power he seeks.

Remember Poindexter? Brilliant man, first in his class at the Naval Academy, later earned a doctorate in physics, rose to national security adviser under President Ronald Reagan. He had this brilliant idea of secretly selling missiles to Iran to pay ransom for hostages, and with the illicit proceeds to illegally support contras in Nicaragua.

A jury convicted Poindexter in 1990 on five felony counts of misleading Congress and making false statements, but an appeals court overturned the verdict because Congress had given him immunity for his testimony. He famously asserted, ''The buck stops here,'' arguing that the White House staff, and not the president, was responsible for fateful decisions that might prove embarrassing.

This ring-knocking master of deceit is back again with a plan even more scandalous than Iran-contra. He heads the ''Information Awareness Office'' in the otherwise excellent Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, which spawned the Internet and stealth aircraft technology. Poindexter is now realizing his 20-year dream: getting the ''data-mining'' power to snoop on every public and private act of every American.

Even the hastily passed U.S.A. Patriot Act, which widened the scope of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act and weakened 15 privacy laws, raised requirements for the government to report secret eavesdropping to Congress and the courts. But Poindexter's assault on individual privacy rides roughshod over such oversight.

He is determined to break down the wall between commercial snooping and secret government intrusion. The disgraced admiral dismisses such necessary differentiation as bureaucratic ''stovepiping.'' And he has been given a $200 million budget to create computer dossiers on 300 million Americans.

When George W. Bush was running for president, he stood foursquare in defense of each person's medical, financial and communications privacy. But Poindexter, whose contempt for the restraints of oversight drew the Reagan administration into its most serious blunder, is still operating on the presumption that on such a sweeping theft of privacy rights, the buck ends with him and not with the president.

This time, however, he has been seizing power in the open. In the past week John Markoff of The Times, followed by Robert O'Harrow of The Washington Post have revealed the extent of Poindexter's operation, but editorialists have not grasped its undermining of the Freedom of Information Act.

Political awareness can overcome ''Total Information Awareness,'' the combined force of commercial and government snooping. In a similar overreach, Attorney General Ashcroft tried his Terrorism Information and Prevention System (TIPS), but public outrage at the use of gossips and postal workers as snoops caused the House to shoot it down. The Senate should now do the same to this other exploitation of fear.

The Latin motto over Poindexter's new Pentagon office reads ''Scientia Est Potentia'' ''knowledge is power.'' Exactly: the government's infinite knowledge about you is its power over you. ''We're just as concerned as the next person with protecting privacy,'' this brilliant mind blandly assured The Post. A jury found he spoke falsely before.

TRIBUTE TO JOHN D. GRAHAM

HON. RICHARD A. GEPHARDT

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 14, 2002

Mr. GEPHARDT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to John D. Graham, a great business leader in St. Louis, and a pioneer in the communications industry. Over the years, I have been proud to see what was once a small St. Louis public relations firm grow to become what is now a widely respected international powerhouse—Fleishman-Hillard. One of the key reasons that this company has become a worldwide leader in the communications industry is the leadership provided by John Graham, its Chairman and CEO.

Recently, that leadership earned John some well-deserved recognition. John received one of my state's greatest honors, the Missouri Honor Medal for Distinguished Service in Journalism. He joins an impressive list of past recipients, which includes Winston Churchill, Walter Cronkite, Gordon Parks, George Gallup, and Tom Brokaw.

In presenting the award, it was noted that John has not only built Fleishman-Hillard into one of the largest agencies in the world, but that he has consistently sought to improve the ethics, integrity, and quality in the practice of his profession. John has always understood the responsibility that comes with communicating with the public, and his emphasis on professional, honest representation has made his company the gold standard for public relations firms.

There is no one more deserving of the Missouri Honor Medal for Distinguished Service in Journalism than John Graham. He will continue to do great things for both Fleishman-Hillard and the St. Louis community. I am proud to call him a friend, and salute his efforts.

TAIWAN RELATIONS ACT SHOULD BE CORNERSTONE OF OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH TAIWAN

HON. STEVE CHABOT

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 14, 2002

Mr. CHABOT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to call attention to our ''One China'' policy and its inability to deal with the current situation in the Taiwan Strait. Since the adoption of the 1972 Shanghai Communique, the United States acknowledges that ''all Chinese on either side of the Taiwan Strait maintain there is but one China and that Taiwan is a part of China.''

This ''One China'' policy, however, does not reflect the reality of Taiwan's maturation into a vibrant democracy. As the distinguished Majority Whip stated in March 2000 in an address to a Center for Strategic and International Studies forum, * * * We must discard old policies that no longer have credibility because they are no longer true * * * whatever utility the ''One China'' policy diplomatic fiction might have had twenty five years ago has been erased by the new reality. Currently there are two states: one being the free, democratic, and peace-loving state of Taiwan. The other is the authoritarian communist regime of the People's Republic of China.''

The PRC, established in 1949, has not for a single day exercised sovereignty over Taiwan. And, in 1991, Taiwan's Kuomintang Party relinquished all claims to being the sole, legitimate government of China. Subsequently, former President Lee Teng Hui, in 1999, referred to cross-strait relations as a ''state to state relationship.'' While this exemplifies a distinction of two separate governments, the U.S. position on this matter remains an influential factor in the peaceful resolution between both sides.

For the past twenty-five years, the U.S. has exercised a delicate diplomacy in which it fails to send consistent messages toward the East Asia region. Little progress has been achieved in our relations with both China and Taiwan because of the various interpretations regarding the ''One China'' policy.

The United States cannot under any circumstances allow the People's Republic of China to impose a communist future on Taiwan. The ''One China'' policy undermines our actions and commitments; rather than clinging to old relics of the cold war era, let us reaffirm our dedication to democratic ideals in the new millennium.

We must redirect our attention toward fulfilling our obligations to Taiwan, as spelled out in the 1979 Taiwan Relations Act. In the Taiwan Relations Act, the United States pledges a full commitment to the defense and security of Taiwan in the event of Chinese aggression. Clearly, the Taiwan Relations Act should be the cornerstone of our relationship with Taiwan—not the obsolete ''One China'' policy.