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## Expanded Wiretapping Threatens Our Liberty

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To the Editor:

The premise of Philip Heymann's view ("Listening In on Terrorism," Op-Ed, Aug. 2) that current proposals to expand Government wiretap authority "pose no threat to Americans' civil liberties" is simple: bad law justifies worse law.

Over the last 30 years, politicians who were convinced that any dissent to their foreign policies must be the result of Communist infiltration have joined forces with those prepared to pay any price for a war on drugs to bring us to the current situation in which the Fourth Amendment is treated — in courts of law as well as in those of public opinion — as an archaic technical obstacle that blocks crime control.

This development is a threat to a free society. The Fourth Amendment's purpose is not to protect criminals. It is to protect those — whether obscure workers in the White House Travel Office or even members of

Congress — whom an incumbent administration wishes, for whatever reason, to label as criminal and to harass with searches and seizures.

The powers now being sought by the Government — to wiretap "suspected terrorists" for 48 hours without judicial authorization, to expand its ability to conduct dragnet wiretapping of locations rather than of individuals, and to reconfigure the architecture of public communications networks without public oversight in order to accomplish surveillance — are all powers that will invariably be abused.

Coupled with a Congressional proposal to prohibit distribution over the Internet of high-school level chemistry material that is available in any local library, this security wish list represents a shortsighted assault on civil liberties and should be rejected.

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New York, Aug. 2, 1996

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