



Bush's Master Plan for the Internet

A Department of Approved Internet Use?

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Bush and his Machiavellian minions will no longer put up with you roaming free into dangerous territory on the internet. You need to be corralled, electronically tethered, kept away from sites promoting conspiracy theories — in other words, information the corporate media, the official U.S. Ministry of Disinformation, does not want you to read or see. It's now increasingly obvious the Bushites want to lock us up in a hermetically sealed informational box and throw away the key. All the information they consider worthwhile will be pumped in through a one-way hole.

During war, as they say, the first causality is truth. And war — all the time and everywhere people resist — is what Bush will deliver. It will be easier for him to accomplish this if you can't read the truth, if you remain ignorant, or if you are obstructed from organizing and speaking out on the internet against war and madness. Bush knows this — or, at least, those around him know this. The internet, regardless of its trashy and lame commercial characteristics, is a nearly perfect medium for organizing. It's a thorn in the side of neo-cons and fascists everywhere.

Enter Dubya's Critical Infrastructure Protection Board (CIPB), which the unelected one created with a flourish of his pen (another executive order, a most popular way to rule vassals). The men and women around Bush want to require internet service providers, ISPs, to build a centralized network capable of monitoring where you go, what you look at and read, what you write in your email — and all in real-time. Of course, they don't say this. What they say is they want to protect you against viruses and terrorist attacks. They want to shield you from Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein, who are everywhere, ready to attack, even on the internet (Osama's cave in Tora Bora, don't you know, bristled with computers and crack virus software programmers).

CIPB

is working on a report, "The National Strategy to Secure Cyberspace," which it will release early next year. It is billed as a strategy for the Ministry of Homeland Security and — this is the laughable part — is subject to congressional review. Yeah, like Congress protected us from Bush's totalitarian Patriot Act and the Ministry of Homeland Security bill. What a joke. 99% of these folks are Bush co-conspirators. When Bush tells them to jump, they ask how high. Your right to travel through cyberspace without a snoop noting your every move is one of the next hoops Bush will wave before an obeisant Congress. The internet is one of the last bastions of resistance. Besides, some rabble-rouser posted the Anarchist's Cookbook on there.

Of course, converting the internet into a big Carnivore system is one thing, while denying you access is quite another. Bush's centralized system will make this a reality. Get labeled a malcontent, a "security risk," or even a "cyber-terrorist" and you can be easily barred from Bush's "secure, trusted, robust, reliable, and available infrastructure." Say the wrong thing on a bulletin board or forum and your ISP — afraid of the government breathing down its neck, yanking its business license, or sicking the IRS on it — may terminate your service. Hell, if things go as Bush and Clan envision most small ISPs will go out of business, replaced by AOL, Comcast, and other rich communications industry friends and big dollar contributors to Project Bush.

Dubya wants to essentially authorize a Department of Approved Internet Use within the Ministry of Homeland Security. This new department will create and demand implementation of new network protocols, take over the task of verifying IT vendors (so much for the conservative idea of getting rid of big government), and issue security assessment and policy tools (maybe Dubya can roll Microsoft into the Ministry of Homeland Security, demand everybody use Windows instead of Mac or Linux because Windows will be "secure" and adapt, at taxpayer expense, the latest government mandated protocols). Don't worry about the cost — this idea comes from the guys who think a \$200 billion war is nothing to sweat, even if it wrecks the economy. Plus, a lot of the cost will be picked up by the ISPs, which is to say you, the subscriber. Nothing like paying through the nose to have the government turn your computer into a Carnivore box.

Just in case you think I'm playing fast and loose with the word "Carnivore," consider what an official with a major data services company who has been briefed on several aspects of the government's plans told John Markoff of The New York Times the other day, "Part of monitoring the Internet and doing real-time analysis is to be able to track incidents while they are occurring... Am I analogizing this to Carnivore? Absolutely. But in fact, it's 10 times worse. Carnivore was working on much smaller feeds and could not scale. This is looking at the whole Internet." OK, I inserted the required quote from a "respected" source, so I guess we can all rest easier now. The idea of Bush squashing a (relatively) free and unhampered internet has now broken free of the besmeared realm of conspiracy theory. Hallelujah!

So there you have it, in a nutshell. You can't be trusted and you will never have privacy again — not on the internet, not with your bank or credit card transactions, medical records, not when you fly on a plane or cross the border, and certainly not if you decide Bush and his neo-con fascists are wrong about forever war and you decide you want to do something about it. As it looks now, things are moving in a bleak direction rather quickly. But even Russians under the yoke of Soviet communism managed to publish samizdats — typed on manual typewriters with multiple carbons, since the photocopying machines were locked up and closely watched by the state — and news thus disseminated, people learned the truth.

Somewhere buried in a box in the closet of my apartment is BBS software on an old, dusty floppy disk. In the days before the web — when the internet was mostly confined to computer students, faculty, government types, and other such privileged geeks — a few of us dialed into computers running BBS software. If Bush and his Critical Infrastructure Protection Board bureaucrats have their way, we may be forced to return to those less sophisticated days. Call it a dial-up samizdat where information remains free. Of course, sooner or later, Bush will get around to making this illegal, too. But where there's a will, there's a way. We may even be reduced to sending CD-ROMs via snail-mail in the future. Or passing them hand-to-hand under the cover of darkness. Truth refuses to be suppressed. It will always break out, regardless of the technology.

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