

The Eyes and Ears of the King

Armed with a [\\$2 billion](#) war chest, the Capitol Police [announced](#) its plan to open field offices outside Washington for the first time. New imperial outposts are planned in California and Florida, with more to come across the country as the Capitol Police intend to monitor Americans from sea to shining sea. As part of this change in mission, new toys are required.

Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin recently [approved](#) a request by Capitol Police for the loan of eight “persistent surveillance systems,” technology originally [deployed by troops in Iraq](#) and Afghanistan. What empires do to foreigners abroad, they eventually do to citizens at home.

The system allows for persistent, high-definition, night-vision-capable surveillance of vast geographical regions. Capitol Police officials remain reticent about how and against whom this technology will be used—and luckily for them, as an agency of the legislative branch, they are [exempt](#) from the prying eyes of the Freedom of Information Act.

Thus, it would seem the immense nature of the domestic national security apparatus, revitalized by the pretext of the Capitol Building riot, is coming into view. Its tendrils sprawl far beyond D.C., bearing not only the muscle of federal agencies, but corporate collaboration as well.

These efforts center on policing so-called legitimate—that is, regime-sanctioned—narratives, opinions, and behaviors. In Michigan, for example, Attorney General Dana Nessel’s office [announced](#) it will begin investigating “allegations that people are profiting off of false claims that the November 2020 presidential election was stolen.” Under the pretense of combating fraud, this could effectively criminalize fundraising efforts by state residents to secure an

independent [election audit](#).

Nessel, a former civil rights attorney, takes a bulldozing legal approach. Emails from March leaked to the press show she wanted restaurant owner Marlena Pavlos-Hackney arrested for defying Michigan's lockdown orders before Fox News could interview her. "We should just have her picked up," Nessel [suggested](#) after learning Hackney would appear on *Tucker Carlson Tonight*. Police indeed [scooped](#) up Pavlos-Hackney a week after the segment.

In the same way that 1960s partisans forced the Federal Communications Commission to strip a Mississippi television station of its [broadcasting license](#) for criticizing civil rights legislation, institutional power is being brought to bear to crush and surveil dissidents. Then, as now, corporations are entering the fray.

The FCC recently created an exemption for Amazon so that the company can build and deploy technology to monitor users' movements in the bedroom with a "higher degree of resolution and location precision." The device is touchless and terrifying in its implications for the last shred of privacy Americans have. Last month, *The Washington Times* [reported](#), "an ADT home security technician was sentenced to slightly more than four years in prison after hacking into customers' video feeds."

But voyeuristic freaks are the least concern. Amazon has lumbered insidiously toward collaboration with intelligence agencies for years. In 2013, Amazon Web Services secured a [\\$600 million](#) contract with the Central Intelligence Agency. Today, it supplies computing cloud services to all agencies of the intelligence community, with [plans](#) for even more growth. So intimately connected to the national security apparatus is Amazon that the company has [branded](#) itself "The Trusted Cloud for Government."

There is plenty of precedent for corporate-political surveillance partnerships. Internal Defense Department documents revealed the Pentagon believes it can bypass First Amendment privacy protections by [outsourcing](#) its surveillance of troops' social media to a private firm. White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki recently [announced](#) the Biden administration is flagging problematic Facebook posts for disinformation about COVID-19 vaccines, and *Politico* [reported](#) that the Democratic National Committee and other groups are planning to work with phone carriers to implement similar censorship of private text messages.

For its own part, Facebook has opted for a rather simple approach, asking users to [snitch](#) on family and friends who may be on the way to “becoming an extremist.” Users who click-through the call to action are transported to the website of a “support” group called Life After Hate, which is “committed to helping people leave the violent far-right to connect with humanity and lead compassionate lives.”

So confident are the corporate and political powers that be that they are openly discussing collaborative efforts to dictate what is and is not misinformation in the public and private spheres—and this will not stop with vaccines or the scarecrow of “white extremism.”

Xenophon's [fictionalized biography of Cyrus the Great](#) contains mention of the “Eyes and Ears of the King,” a massive public surveillance system so ubiquitous that it became impossible to escape and incentivized suspicion among neighbors. The people grew terrified to speak and act freely, even in private, but they did not call it a tyranny. It merely became a fact of life, as it has now.

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