

Washington and national news in brief

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Body

WASHINGTON, D.C.

Bill would authorize warrantless spying

The White House is nearing an agreement with Congress on legislation that would write President Bush's warrantless surveillance program into law, the Senate Judiciary Committee chairman said Sunday.

Bush administration officials have said they did not think changes were needed to empower the National Security Agency to eavesdrop without court approval on communications between people in the United States and overseas when terrorism is suspected.

But Sen. Arlen Specter, R-Pa., and other critics contend the program skirted a 1978 law that required the government to get approval from a secretive federal court before Americans could be monitored.

"We're getting close with the discussions with the White House, I think, to having the wiretapping issue submitted to the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court," Specter told "Fox News Sunday."

8% of brutality filings lead to cop discipline

Eight percent of citizen complaints that police officers used too much force turned up enough evidence to justify discipline of an officer, a Justice Department survey of large state and local forces reported Sunday.

The survey by the department's Bureau of Justice Statistics found 26,556 complaints of excessive police force were filed in 2002 with state and local law enforcement agencies that have at least 100 full-time officers.

Taken together, police agencies of this size account for 59 percent of the nation's law enforcement officers but about 5 percent of all law enforcement agencies.

The data was collected in 2003, the first time the government asked about the outcome of citizen complaints about police use of force. So there is no historical data with which to compare the results.

Lawmaker urges probe of financial data report

The chairman of the House Homeland Security Committee urged the Bush administration on Sunday to seek criminal charges against newspapers that reported on a secret financial-monitoring program used to trace terrorists.

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Rep. Peter King cited the New York Times in particular for publishing a story last week that reported the Treasury Department was working with the CIA to examine messages within a massive international database of money-transfer records.

King, R-N.Y., said he would write Attorney General Alberto Gonzales urging that the nation's chief law enforcer ``begin an investigation and prosecution of the New York Times."

A message by the Associated Press left Sunday with Times spokeswoman Catherine Mathis was not immediately returned.

MARYLAND**Rains wash out roads along Eastern Shore**

Heavy rains caused serious flooding Sunday in parts of Maryland's Eastern Shore, washing out roads and forcing evacuations.

Federalsburg Mayor Betty Ballas declared an emergency for the town of about 2,600 on Sunday morning after 10 to 12 inches of rain fell overnight. About 30 people had to evacuate, police said.

There were reports of four to five feet of water in some areas, said Jeff Welsh of the Maryland Emergency Management Agency.

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