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### Main Core, PROMIS and the Shadow Government pt.1

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Ed Encho



"Over the last two weeks I have encountered just such an apocalyptic situation, where I and the Department of Justice have been asked to be part of something that is fundamentally wrong."

(Excerpt from Deputy Attorney General James Comey's [draft letter of resignation](#) to President Bush, dated March 16, 2004, which Comey did not in the end send.)

"Nothing was your own except the few cubic centimetres inside your skull" (George Orwell: 1984)

I: Main Core and PROMIS

Suppose that the United States Government, or more likely an unaccountable privatized intelligence colossus empowered by the reaction to the 9/11 attacks and fueled by the rampant cronyism of a system long ago gone rotten had a surveillance tool capable of peering into the most private aspects of American lives on a whim. Now suppose that the new growth industry of a previously unthinkable futuristic police state was already in place, fully operational and has been online and has actively been being utilized for domestic spying for years before those two airplanes slammed into the World Trade Center. The 'terrorist' attacks were used as the justification for every unconstitutional reigning in of civil liberties ever since that heinous September morning seven years ago when the reset button was hit on two and a quarter centuries of American history and we all stepped forth into the brave new world of perpetual war, fear, suspicion and vengeance into a parallel reality in a place that would come to be known as The Homeland. What if this surveillance industrial complex was in possession of a database that was so large and so powerful that not only could it instantly process and retrieve the most minute or intimate aspects of a citizen's lives but was also able to utilize extremely sophisticated artificial intelligence capabilities to actually predict likely patterns of future behavior.

Such a huge database would be able to use cutting edge technology funded with taxpayer dollars and awarded to unaccountable private corporations largely through 'business as usual' no bid contracts to create the most invasive tool of oppression this country has ever seen. This database would rely on software that was capable of performing [social network analysis](#) based on [block modeling technology](#) to monitor all forms of electronic communications, all internet searches, all debit and credit card transactions, all travel arrangements, all library records, all bank activity and all telephone records. It would then be able to use the data to not only find links between persons who already know and interact with each other but to categorize each individual into a particular group that possess similar behavioral and purchasing habits. These groups could then be further divided into subgroups and further analyzed in order to determine under some loosely defined and largely unknown guidelines whether they could potentially represent a threat. While all of this may sound like some sort of futuristic dystopian nightmare straight out of Philip K. Dick's Minority Report and "Precrime" it is very real and it goes by the name of [Main Core](#). For example, if you are selling a bicycle and run an advertisement in your local newspaper and you happen to receive a call from a Muhammad who is interested in your bicycle and Muhammad happens to have certain friends who have relationships with an organization that is determined by some unknown criteria to be a potential terrorist organization then the call that you received from Muhammad would then in all likelihood place you in the database and subject to an increased level of scrutiny at best and at worst in jeopardy of being picked up and held indefinitely without any sort of judicial review.

This technology is being used today absent any form of legitimate oversight, with a Constitution that has

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been eviscerated by the Bush-Cheney-Rove Axis of Evil, a vast gulag network of top secret prisons and 'detention facilities' and the decidedly anti-American new phenomenon of state sanctioned torture. Throw in an overworked, systematically dumbed-down populace that has been propagandized by the corrupt institution that is the corporate media machine with it's clever use of fear and loathing and scientific development of advanced mind control techniques who despite the infinite wisdom of our forefathers would gladly sacrifice their liberty for the any sort of temporary safety (no matter that it is fleeting) and there exists today in 'The Homeland' a perfect petri dish for an authoritarian fascist society.

It is though a very sophisticated form of fascism unlike more outwardly obvious regimes that we have known in the past. Author Bertram Gross published a book back in 1980 that was entitled **Friendly Fascism**, Jim Garrison once said that "fascism would come to America in the name of national security", and author Kevin Phillips in his 1983 book **Post-Conservative America** warned of the potential of an "apple pie authoritarianism" and a coming society in which: "the Star Spangled Benner would wave with greater frequency and over many more parades; increased surveillance would crack down on urban outbreaks and extreme political dissidents". This very accurately describes post 9/11 America where any semblance of reason has been abandoned for cheap flag-waving pimped off as patriotism, criticism of authority has made into potential treason by the highly paid skills for neoconservative doctrine, sloganeering and demagoguery have replaced discourse, critical thinking is becoming extinct and just as George Orwell so accurately predicted Big Brother is now watching over us, protecting us and ensuring that we understand that war is peace, freedom is slavery and ignorance is strength.

But I digress...

Main Core has received attention in two 2008 articles, one a piece by investigative journalist Christopher Ketcham entitled **The Last Roundup** (which also looks at **Continuity of Government** programs but more on that in a little while) and Tim Shorrock entitled **Exposing Bush's Historic Abuse of Power**. Both articles tie Main Core to the now legendary **PROMIS** software, an extremely advanced program designed to aid federal prosecutors in case management tracking. PROMIS could pull and put together a wide range of data from disparate sources into a single record. The PROMIS software was created by **INSLAW** Inc., a company owned by a former NSA intelligence officer named William Hamilton. PROMIS was to have been licensed to the U.S. government in the early 1980's before the technology boom became widespread but was then stolen by the seamy officials in Ronald Reagan's Justice Department. The software was modified for espionage purposes to include a 'back door' that could be used for spying on those that it was sold to and in a detail that should be especially relevant with the economic crisis that threatens to crash the global financial system, the software could also be used to track in real time (in order to manipulate?) stock market transactions, once can certainly speculate as to how such a tool could have contributed to an economic catastrophe as we are now facing if it were used for such a thing. It is important to keep in mind the period when PROMIS was stolen in the early 1980's and the fact that the technology boom was still years in the future which should give one an idea to just how far advanced and therefore how important that it was to those who would use it in order to promote a sinister agenda.

Mr. Shorrock's piece goes into the relationship between PROMIS and Main Core in some detail:

According to William Hamilton, a former NSA intelligence officer who left the agency in the 1970s, that description sounded a lot like Main Core, which he first heard about in detail in 1992. Hamilton, who is the president of Inslaw Inc., a computer services firm with many clients in government and the private sector, says there are strong indications that the Bush administration's domestic surveillance operations use Main Core.

Hamilton's company Inslaw is widely respected in the law enforcement community for creating a program called the Prosecutors' Management Information System, or PROMIS. It keeps track of criminal investigations through a powerful search engine that can quickly access all stored data components of a case, from the name of the initial investigators to the telephone numbers of key suspects. PROMIS, also widely used in the insurance industry, can also sort through other databases fast, with results showing up almost instantly. "It operates just like Google," Hamilton told me in an interview in his Washington office in May.

Since the late 1980s, Inslaw has been involved in a legal dispute over its claim that Justice Department officials in the Reagan administration appropriated the PROMIS software. Hamilton claims that Reagan officials gave PROMIS to the NSA and the CIA, which then adapted the software -- and its outstanding ability to search other databases -- to manage intelligence operations and track financial transactions. Over the years, Hamilton has employed prominent lawyers to pursue the case, including Elliot Richardson, the former attorney general and secretary of defense who died in 1999, and C. Boyden Gray, the former White House counsel to President George H.W. Bush. The dispute has never been settled. But based on the long-running case, Hamilton says he believes U.S. intelligence uses PROMIS as the primary software for searching the Main Core database.

Hamilton was first told about the connection between PROMIS and Main Core in the spring of 1992 by a U.S. intelligence official, and again in 1995 by a former NSA official. In July 2001, Hamilton says, he discussed his case with retired Adm. Dan Murphy, a former military advisor to Elliot Richardson who later served under President George H.W. Bush as deputy director of the CIA. Murphy, who died shortly after his meeting with Hamilton, did not specifically mention Main Core. But he informed Hamilton that the NSA's use of PROMIS involved something "so seriously wrong that money alone cannot cure the problem," Hamilton told me. He added, "I believe in retrospect that Murphy was alluding to Main Core." Hamilton also provided copies of letters that Richardson and Gray sent to U.S. intelligence officials and the Justice Department on Inslaw's behalf alleging that the NSA and the CIA had appropriated PROMIS for intelligence use.

Hamilton says James B. Comey's congressional testimony in May 2007, in which he described a hospitalized John Ashcroft's dramatic standoff with senior Bush officials Alberto Gonzales and Andrew Card, was another illuminating moment. "It was then that we

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[at Inslaw] started hearing again about the Main Core derivative of PROMIS for spying on Americans," he told me.

Through a former senior Justice Department official with more than 25 years of government experience, Salon has learned of a high-level former national security official who reportedly has firsthand knowledge of the U.S. government's use of Main Core. The official worked as a senior intelligence analyst for a large domestic law enforcement agency inside the Bush White House. He would not agree to an interview. But according to the former Justice Department official, the former intelligence analyst told her that while stationed at the White House after the 9/11 attacks, one day he accidentally walked into a restricted room and came across a computer system that was logged on to what he recognized to be the Main Core database. When she mentioned the specific name of the top-secret system during their conversation, she recalled, "he turned white as a sheet."

An article in Radar magazine in May, citing three unnamed former government officials, reported that "8 million Americans are now listed in Main Core as potentially suspect" and, in the event of a national emergency, "could be subject to everything from heightened surveillance and tracking to direct questioning and even detention."

The INSLAW/PROMIS story reached deep into the darkest bowels of an increasingly secretive and malevolent [National Security State](#) that had manifested itself in the Reagan administration, the arms for hostages '[October Surprise](#)' deal that sank Jimmy Carter's bid for re-election leading to the Reagan-Bush hostile takeover of America, [Iran-Contra](#), [BCCI](#), media manipulation (see Robert Parry's excellent special report for [Consortium News](#) entitled [Iran Contra's 'lost chapter'](#)), Oliver North's swashbuckling adventures with C.O.G., [drugs for guns](#) and subversion of Congress all were components of Reagan's government, a government that he hypocritically railed against for its intrusiveness and yet presided over while the shadow government that would rise again with the Supreme Court installation of George W. Bush as president with many of the key operatives of Reagan and George H.W. Bush's dark shops of oppression being given key positions in this brazenly lawless administration that has brought America to the brink of fascism. Many of these hard-liners remain in place throughout the bureaucracy in order to do whatever is necessary to preserve the power of the shadow government.

Ketcham's [The Last Roundup](#) is particularly of interest in that he examines the now infamous 2004 visit of Bush administration officials Alberto Gonzalez and Andrew Card to the hospital room of Attorney General John Ashcroft who had been stricken with pancreatitis after acting A.G. James Comey refused to sign off on the reauthorization of what was an illegal surveillance program related to Continuity of Government. The story is fascinating in that it not only illustrated the length to which the Bush-Cheney junta would go to in order to keep their dirty little programs in place but also for the high speed chase through the streets of Washington and the race up the hospital stairs that Comey engaged in to beat Gonzalez and Card to the sedated Ashcroft to take advantage of a sick man, when John Ashcroft actually comes out looking like a heroic figure it becomes very apparent of just how grossly un-American that this flagrantly criminal administration truly is. James Comey went on to give testimony to Congress over the [hospital room showdown](#) and more details are available from blogger Glenn Greenwald in his piece entitled [What illegal "things" was the government doing in 2001-2004?](#) and in Barton Gellman's book [Angler](#) and excerpts were published in the Washington Post which [part one](#) and [part two](#) can be read for more information on the back story behind the surveillance reauthorization. Murray Waas also has done a story on whether former Attorney General Gonzalez [created a set of falsified notes](#) to provide a cover story for what occurred while trying to bully Comey and Ashcroft into signing off on the obviously illegal surveillance program.

Excerpts from Ketcham's story are chilling:

According to a senior government official who served with high-level security clearances in five administrations, "There exists a database of Americans, who, often for the slightest and most trivial reason, are considered unfriendly, and who, in a time of panic, might be incarcerated. The database can identify and locate perceived 'enemies of the state' almost instantaneously." He and other sources tell Radar that the database is sometimes referred to by the code name Main Core. One knowledgeable source claims that 8 million Americans are now listed in Main Core as potentially suspect. In the event of a national emergency, these people could be subject to everything from heightened surveillance and tracking to direct questioning and possibly even detention.

Of course, federal law is somewhat vague as to what might constitute a "national emergency." Executive orders issued over the past three decades define it as a "natural disaster, military attack, [or] technological or other emergency," while Department of Defense documents include eventualities like "riots, acts of violence, insurrections, unlawful obstructions or assemblages, [and] disorder prejudicial to public law and order." According to one news report, even "national opposition to U.S. military invasion abroad" could be a trigger.

Let's imagine a harrowing scenario: coordinated bombings in several American cities culminating in a major blast—say, a suitcase nuke—in New York City. Thousands of civilians are dead. Commerce is paralyzed. A state of emergency is declared by the president. Continuity of Governance plans that were developed during the Cold War and aggressively revised since 9/11 go into effect. Surviving government officials are shuttled to protected underground complexes carved into the hills of Maryland, Virginia, and Pennsylvania. Power shifts to a "parallel government" that consists of scores of secretly preselected officials. (As far back as the 1980s, Donald Rumsfeld, then CEO of a pharmaceutical company, and Dick Cheney, then a congressman from Wyoming, were slated to step into key positions during a declared emergency.) The executive branch is the sole and absolute seat of authority, with Congress and the judiciary relegated to advisory roles at best. The country becomes, within a matter of hours, a police state.

And -

Under law, during a national emergency, FEMA and its parent organization, the Department of Homeland Security, would be empowered to seize private and public property, all forms of transport, and

all food supplies. The agency could dispatch military commanders to run state and local governments, and it could order the arrest of citizens without a warrant, holding them without trial for as long as the acting government deems necessary. From the comfortable perspective of peaceful times, such behavior by the government may seem far-fetched. But it was not so very long ago that FDR ordered 120,000 Japanese Americans—everyone from infants to the elderly—be held in detention camps for the duration of World War II. This is widely regarded as a shameful moment in U.S. history, a lesson learned. But a long trail of federal documents indicates that the possibility of large-scale detention has never quite been abandoned by federal authorities. Around the time of the 1968 race riots, for instance, a paper drawn up at the U.S. Army War College detailed plans for rounding up millions of "militants" and "American negroes," who were to be held at "assembly centers or relocation camps." In the late 1980s, the Austin American-Statesman and other publications reported the existence of 10 detention camp sites on military facilities nationwide, where hundreds of thousands of people could be held in the event of domestic political upheaval. More such facilities were commissioned in 2006, when Kellogg Brown & Root—then a subsidiary of Halliburton—was handed a \$385 million contract to establish "temporary detention and processing capabilities" for the Department of Homeland Security. The contract is short on details, stating only that the facilities would be used for "an emergency influx of immigrants, or to support the rapid development of new programs." Just what those "new programs" might be is not specified.

In the days after our hypothetical terror attack, events might play out like this: With the population gripped by fear and anger, authorities undertake unprecedented actions in the name of public safety. Officials at the Department of Homeland Security begin actively scrutinizing people who—for a tremendously broad set of reasons—have been flagged in Main Core as potential domestic threats. Some of these individuals might receive a letter or a phone call, others a request to register with local authorities. Still others might hear a knock on the door and find police or armed soldiers outside. In some instances, the authorities might just ask a few questions. Other suspects might be arrested and escorted to federal holding facilities, where they could be detained without counsel until the state of emergency is no longer in effect.

Despite the departure of the Bush regime, martial law is a very serious possibility with it having now been established that the executive branch can exercise dictatorial powers during a "catastrophic emergency" (as put forth in the Bush administration's [NSPD-51](#)) which is defined as "any incident, regardless of location, that results in extraordinary levels of mass casualties, damage, or disruption severely affecting the U.S. population, infrastructure, environment, economy or government functions". With events unfolding as they currently are it is especially troubling to note that the "economy" is one of the criteria that would trigger the declaration of martial law, the current economic crisis along with the lack of will to do what it takes to make corrections rather than bailing out and essentially giving amnesty to the Wall Street looters who are responsible for it only guarantees that the collapse when it does come will be much more devastating. An [article in The Army Times](#) that was published last fall reveals that as of October troop deployments will include 'Homeland' duty under the command of [NORTHCOM](#). Assignments will allow for an increased public visibility (translation: getting Americans used to seeing troops on the streets) and will have a stated purpose as follows: "They may be called upon to help with civil unrest and crowd control or to deal with potentially horrific scenarios such as massive poisoning and chaos in response to a chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear or high-yield explosive, or CBRNE, attack." If action by the military (and the unaccountable mercenaries from privatized 'security' firms like Blackwater) is decided to be merited by the unitary executive and a state of martial law declared then exactly what exactly is going to happen to those "8 million" names that Ketcham writes of as "potentially suspect" who are in the Main Core database?

That Main Core and PROMIS are linked raises some extremely provocative questions in regards to intent on the subversion of the Constitution and the overthrow of the legitimate government by a [shadow government](#) using the Continuity of Government infrastructure. Ketcham also references a massive 1993 piece for Wired Magazine entitled [The INSLAW Octopus](#) that none other than the infamous rogue operative Lt. Col. Oliver North was using PROMIS for illegal surveillance purposes:

Lt. Col. Oliver North also may have been using the program. According to several intelligence community sources, PROMIS was in use at a 6,100-square-foot command center built on the sixth floor of the Justice Department. According to both a contractor who helped design the center and information disclosed during the Iran-Contra hearings, Oliver North had a similar, but smaller, White House operations room that was connected by computer link to the DOJ's command center.

Using the computers in his command center, North tracked dissidents and potential troublemakers within the United States as part of a domestic emergency preparedness program, commissioned under Reagan's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), according to sources and published reports. Using PROMIS, sources point out, North could have drawn up lists of anyone ever arrested for a political protest, for example, or anyone who had ever refused to pay their taxes. Compared to PROMIS, Richard Nixon's enemies list or Sen. Joe McCarthy's blacklist look downright crude. This operation was so sensitive that when Rep. Jack Brooks asked North about it during the Iran-Contra hearings, the hearing was immediately suspended pending an executive (secret) conference. When the hearings were reconvened, the issue of North's FEMA dealings was dropped.

North's involvement with Continuity of Government programs including REX 84 has long been known and while Col. North no longer is active in such programs (at least not to the knowledge of anyone) a larger part of the C.O.G./shadow government infrastructure continued to breed in darkness and secrecy and on that most glorious day for American fascism, 9/11/2001 went live under the guidance of one of its most ardent and longtime architects, former Vice President Richard B. Cheney.

The secrets of Main Core, PROMIS and other variations of the monstrous tools of an out of control shadow government are the veritable crown jewels of the police state and every effort has and will continue to be vigorously employed to stifle any investigations through the official channels. Is there really any doubt that these surveillance systems aren't being used for raw political purposes and for blackmail? How much serious opposition did the Bush-Cheney-Rove Axis of Evil meet in their systematic dismantling of the Constitution over the past eight years? How much of it will the Obama



administration undo? In the ongoing exploitation of the 'terrorist' attacks of 9/11 that have been used to justify each and every incursion on American civil liberties and thugs like Dick Cheney and David Addington acting as the muscle for the shadow government (as is evident in the stories linked to above) the footfalls of those little cat feet grow louder and louder.

Now if PROMIS was being used by Colonel North as a part of Rex 84 back in the 1980's when the Continuity of Government plans were being tweaked, FEMA being set up for the eventual incorporation into the Department of Homeland Security and financial transactions as well as communications already being monitored what does that say about the current state in which we all find ourselves in? Every new police state measure has been implemented largely after being conceived in secrecy under the premise of 'national security' and NSPD-51 has allowed for the executive branch to issue a declaration of martial law under which the **roundup of dissidents** for detention (or worse) will be conducted. And this has all been non-reviewable by Congress, a supposedly (at least according to the Constitution) a co-equal branch of government. When a Congressman named Peter DeFazio was last year **denied access to the NSPD-51/C.O.G. plans** by the Bush administration it was yet another example of what has been a disturbing pattern. The Main Core list of potential 'enemies of the state', the assignment of troops to NORTHCOM, the ongoing frantic efforts of the neocons to launch a war with Iran, the threat of the Cheney cabal being further exposed, the deteriorating economy and the growing public anger at government along with a loss of faith in public institutions all add up to something very dark that is about to come to fruition after decades of planning.

None of this is about terrorism at all, it never has been. It is all about the implementation of a fascist style dictatorship in America. It is imperative that it be brought to light now that there is a window of opportunity and a new administration, the police state and the illegal surveillance system must be dismantled and our intelligence system be put under honest and principled oversight.

(This is the first installment of what will be an ongoing series)

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