CRS Report of the Week: Wiretapping and Electronic Eavesdropping

August 7, 2009

The Congressional Research Service is a $100 million a year think tank that researches and writes informative and non-partisan reports on topics suggested by members of Congress. The catch-and the reason you might not have read their work-is that CRS reports are only made easily available to members of Congress. Citizens can request these reports from lawmakers, but without a public index, they can't request something they don't know exists. The CRS Reports currently rank first on CDT's Most Wanted Government Documents. In an ongoing effort liberate these documents, CDT runs Open CRS, an online repository of public CRS Reports. To spotlight these reports, I will be writing "CRS Report of the Week" posts and feature a relevant report each week. These reports are informative in both that they serve as excellent primers to political issues and that they offer a degree of insight into what information is circulating around Congress. Privacy: An Abbreviated Outline of Federal Statutes Governing Wiretapping and Electronic Eavesdropping [1] Report Number: 98-327 Date: September 02, 2008 Wiretapping and electronic eavesdropping laws are important knowledge for anyone concerned about privacy. This CRS Report offers a brief introduction to what the Electronic Communications Privacy Act (ECPA) and the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) actually mean. The report covers what is prohibited, the procedure for court ordered wiretapping (and how FISA is different), and the Protect America Act. The section on the history on the evolution of wiretapping is particularly interesting as it shows the piecemeal development of wiretap law. This provides a glimmer of insight [2] into how the current situation of incomplete protections developed. CDT's work [3] on warrantless surveillance and wiretap [4] can offer information on the most recent developments in the area. The detail-oriented may have noticed that this CRS Report is an abbreviated outline. For the determined, the original 164 page overview is available here [5].

- surveillance
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