



Congressmen Propose Domestic Distribution of Pro-U.S. Propaganda

In Greek mythology, [the Hydra was a serpent-like beast](#) that possessed many heads. Perhaps the most frightening quality of this fearsome amphibian was the fact that for each head that was cut off two grew in its place and the breath from these new heads were more poisonous than the one they replaced.

Such is the case with the National Defense Authorization Act of 2013. Just as constitutionalists are busy hacking at the deadly indefinite detention provisions that were codified in the 2012 version, the iteration being proposed for the next fiscal year contains elements that are perhaps more constitutionally lethal.



[As we have reported](#), there were about 140 amendments to the bill that were considered along with the larger legislation. One of these allows the federal government to print pro-American propaganda for domestic distribution. Ostensibly, the purpose of the pamphlets is to combat al-Qaeda's attempts to discredit the United States and its policy of delivering democracy via drone attacks.

Such materials were previously only broadcast overseas for the pleasure of foreign audiences but a provision in the "[Smith-Mundt Modernization Act of 2012](#)" (H.R. 5736) would remove that restriction, making "available, in the United States, motion pictures, films, video, audio, and other materials prepared for dissemination abroad or disseminated abroad pursuant to this Act...."

Intended as an update to the post-World War II Smith-Mundt Act of 1948, the bill's primary sponsors are Representatives Mac Thornberry (R-Texas) and Adam Smith (D-Washington). Currently, the House Committee on Foreign Affairs is considering the proposal.

If this amendment remains attached to the Fiscal Year 2013 NDAA and is passed by Congress and signed by the President, then for the first time in the history of the United States, citizens and residents will be exposed to government-produced propaganda in a manner that would impress even Orwell's Big Brother.

As expected neither Congressman Thornberry nor Smith admit that the underlying purpose of their amendment is the brainwashing of Americans by the federal government. In fact, in [a joint press statement released by the two lawmakers](#), Thornberry and Smith soft-pedal the purpose of the provision by trotting out the favorite trope of the claque constantly clamoring for the exchange of liberty for security.

"We continue to face a multitude of threats and we need to be able to counter them in a multitude of ways. Communication is among the most important," said Rep. Thornberry. "This outdated law ties the



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hands of America's diplomatic officials, military, and others by inhibiting our ability to effectively communicate in a credible and transparent way. Congress has a responsibility to fix the situation," Thornberry said.

"While the Smith-Mundt Act of 1948 was developed to counter communism during the Cold War, it is outdated for the conflicts of today," said Congressman Adam Smith. "Effective strategic communication and public diplomacy should be front-and-center as we work to roll back al-Qaeda's and other violent extremists' influence among disaffected populations. An essential part of our efforts must be a coordinated, comprehensive, adequately resourced plan to counter their radical messages and undermine their recruitment abilities. To do this, Smith-Mundt must be updated to bolster our strategic communications and public diplomacy capacity on all fronts and mediums - especially online."

The expression of such specter-summoning sentiments is disappointing coming from Representative Smith. As has been [well chronicled by *The New American*](#), Smith was the co-sponsor, along with Representative Justin Amash (R-Michigan) of the Smith-Amash Amendment to the NDAA 2013. This measure would have repealed the indefinite detention provision passed overwhelmingly last year as part of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) of 2012. Shamefully, on May 18, Smith's colleagues in the House of Representatives rejected the proposal by a vote of 182-238.

Regardless of his previous championing of Constitutional liberties, Smith has now signed on to hasten the dawning of a new day of domestic agitprop in the United States. [Some observers recognize the writing on the wall](#) and the hand that holds the paint brush.

"Clearly there are ways to modernize for the information age without wiping out the distinction between domestic and foreign audiences," Michael Shank of the Institute for Economics and Peace in Washington tells BuzzFeed, one of the online outlets who have boldly warned readers about the amendment. "That Reps Adam Smith and Mac Thornberry want to roll back protections put in place by previously-serving Senators — who, in their wisdom, ensured limits to taxpayer-funded propaganda promulgated by the US government - is disconcerting and dangerous."

As one might expect, Representative Smith has refuted the charges that he supports the dissemination of pro-federal government (read: pro-protracted foreign conflict) throughout the Republic. [A subsequent statement released by Smith](#) re-casts his amendment in a less [Goebbelian](#) light.

Unfortunately, recent articles have misinterpreted the intent and impact of the Thornberry-Smith amendment in the NDAA. This amendment is intended to ensure that the US government can get factual information out in a timely manner to counter extremist misinformation and propaganda. It does not and is not in any way intended to 'legalize the use of propaganda on American audiences' and, in fact, specifically ensures that the content to be rebroadcast or republished domestically by the Department of State and the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) shall not influence public opinion in the US. It clearly states, no funds authorized to be appropriated to State Department or BBG for any activity shall be used to influence public opinion.

While Representative Smith's lips draw nigh unto the Constitution, the text of his bill is far from it. A fair reading of H.R. 5736 reveals that the 60-plus year prohibition on domestic distribution of "motion pictures, films, video, audio, and other materials" produced by the federal government to promote is globalist agenda is explicitly repealed.

In fact, despite the co-sponsors' denials, Section 208(b) of their proposal plainly mandates that:

Nothing in this section shall be construed to prohibit the Department of State or the Broadcasting



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Board of Governors from engaging in any medium or form of communication, either directly or indirectly, because a United States domestic audience is or may be thereby exposed to program material, or based on a presumption of such exposure. Such material may be made available within the United States and disseminated, when appropriate, pursuant to sections 502 and 1005 of the United States Information and Educational Exchange Act of 1948....

Citizens of this Republic are being continuously bombarded by the federal government's big media shills with stories designed to soften the blow of the assault on liberty by wrapping the iron fist of fascism within the velvet glove of a safer America. The difference should this bill be passed is that the funds for the pummel of propaganda will come from our tax dollars.

We are now monitored by our government without warrants and should we speak out against such deprivations we run the risk of having our names added to a list of potential threats to the security of the homeland. Once a person's name is aggregated to that roster, there is little to prevent him from having his one-way ticket to Guantanamo Bay punched by the President. That's assuming a drone attack wouldn't be quicker.

Photo: Big Brother's face looms from giant telescreens in Victory Square in Michael Radford's 1984 film adaptation of George Orwell's book, 1984.



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