

The astonishing extent of Britain's surveillance society was revealed for the first time yesterday.

Three million snooping operations have been carried out over the past decade under controversial anti-terror laws.

They include tens of thousands of undercover missions by councils and other state bodies which are not responsible for law enforcement.

Cases include a family who were spied on to check they were not cheating on school catchment area rules and so-called 'bin criminals'.

The campaign group Justice is demanding the hugely controversial Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act – under which all the operations were authorised – be scrapped altogether.

The group's report, titled Freedom from Suspicion, says: 'The UK has, in the space of 40 years, gone from a society in which mass surveillance was largely a theoretical possibility to one in which it has become not only ubiquitous but routine.'

Written by computathug

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POWERS THE SNOOPERS HAVE



Watched: Jenny Paton and husband Tim

COMMUNICATIONS DATA: Access phone bills or other information revealing who a person called, what time, for how long and even where they were when the call was made. Used to establish location of fly-tippers, for example. Used by all public bodies. Access is not permitted to the content of the call ie. what was said.

DIRECTED SURVEILLANCE: Permits an official to go undercover to monitor the movements and behaviour of a member of the public. They can be followed or watched from a distance to see if, for example, they are cheating school catchment area rules. Available to councils.

COVERT HUMAN INTELLIGENCE SOURCES: Undercover agents who interact with an unsuspecting member of public to secure information about their behaviour or plans. Available to all public bodies, police and security services.

INTERCEPTION WARRANTS: Grants access to the content (what is said or written) of phone calls, emails and internet visits. Limited to the security services and police.

INTRUSIVE SURVEILLANCE: Allows the planting of secret bugs or listening devices in a suspect's car or home. Not available to Town Halls. Use is heavily restricted, and normally relates to serious crime and counter terrorism.

AND THE MINISTERS' POWER GRAB

MINISTERS are preparing to hand themselves sweeping Henry VIII-style powers which will enable them to rewrite the statute book without consulting Parliament.

The Lords Constitution Committee said the Government's Protection of Freedoms Bill would allow ministers to create more extensive powers of entry to homes and premises without needing further legislation. The Government has said the power would mainly be used 'to consolidate dif-

ferent powers of entry'. But the peers warned that 'benign intentions in the future ought not to be assumed'.

They accused the Government of trying to create 'a very considerable Henry VIII clause to rewrite the statute book other than through the ordinary processes of primary legislation'.

The Henry VIII term refers to a similar power conferred on the Tudor king by the 1539 Statute of Proclamations.

Big Brother's THREE MILLION targets: Massive surge in intrusive surveillance by state snoopers Read

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