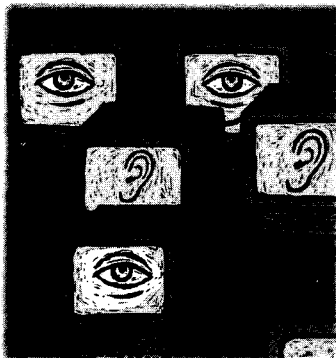


## Project Echelon

By Jeff A. Taylor

For those joining the story late—like the vast majority of American media outlets—the National Security Agency's mysterious Echelon



surveillance program is finally getting a close look in Washington. This comes two years after a report for the European Parliament first claimed that "within Europe, all e-mail, telephone and fax communications are routinely intercepted by the United States National Security Agency." The report further alleged that Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and the United Kingdom regularly shared electronic surveillance data with the U.S.

The revelations attracted intense media interest in Australia, including a prime-time TV report that teased out an admission from Australian officials that yes, Echelon existed. After that, the European report didn't seem so kooky.

In November, the American Civil Liberties Union launched a Web site, [www.echelonwatch.org](http://www.echelonwatch.org), dedicated to watching the watchmen. And in December the Electronic Privacy Information

Center sued the NSA in an attempt to get a definitive answer to whether Echelon is used to monitor electronic communications within the United States. Of course, a clear "yes" would mean the NSA is violating the law.

Now Congress seems serious about getting some answers about the program. In the past, the NSA has stiff-armed requests for information about Echelon. But Rep. Bob Barr (R-Ga.), a former federal prosecutor and CIA analyst, hasn't taken no for an answer. He plans to hold hearings on Echelon before the House Government Reform Committee this year. If they take place, they will be the first oversight hearings dealing with U.S. intelligence gathering since the Church Committee hearings 25 years ago.

## Coffin Fit

By Ryan H. Sager

When Tommy Wilson and the Rev. Nathaniel Craigmiles started selling caskets at discount prices, they thought they were providing a service. To regulators, though, they were criminals.

Craigmiles/Wilson Casket Supply in Chattanooga never handles bodies; nor does it perform burials. Nonetheless, Tennessee law says it can't sell caskets from a retail location unless one of the proprietors becomes a licensed funeral director, a process that costs at least \$8,000 and requires two years of training in running funerals

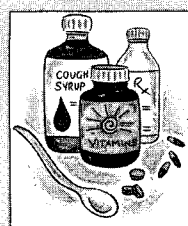


## Balance Sheet

By Jeff A. Taylor

ASSETS

▲ **Modern Pro-Meatiness.** In the face of WTO protests in Seattle, President Clinton defends genetically modified foods. So-called Frankenfoods have Europeans up in arms, mostly because they are American and cheap. "I would never permit any pound of American food product to leave the country if it was unsafe," Clinton says. The Euros drop a demand for a "working group" on the issue.



▲ **Health Bid.** The Internet routes around medical supply choke points, as sites like Pharmabid ([www.pharmabid.com](http://www.pharmabid.com)) bring the auction site model to medical supplies. Small providers can now get blood products, vaccines, hormones, and syringes at rates previously available only to the big guys. Of course, the FDA worries that buyers will be duped.

▲ **Diesel and Dust.** Good ol' Standard & Poor's adds Yahoo! Inc. to its S&P 500 index. The Web portal replaces Laidlaw Inc., which runs school buses, the Greyhound bus line, and ambulances—not exactly a New Economy business model.

▲ **Return Fire.** Gun supporters launch a legal counterattack on the mayors of 23 cities who have sued gun makers for damages. The Second Amendment Foundation accuses the mayors of conspiring to bankrupt and destroy the gun industry. The mayors claim to have arrived at the lawsuit idea independently. The Feds, though, sign on to the lawsuits.

▲ **Film Noir.** The FBI fails to disappear a Web-based Y2K-disaster spoof video. It tells the Michigan-based Web host of a six-minute film, a pretend peek inside plans for a race riot, to pull the movie lest his upstream provider nuke him. Mirror sites appear overnight for the film, which gets thousands of viewings thanks to the FBI attention.

and embalming.

The state has ordered the pair to stop selling caskets or risk criminal prosecution. Craigmiles, Wilson, and the owners of another casket store in Knoxville have responded by filing a suit in federal court. Represented by the D.C.-based Institute for Justice, the plaintiffs claim the law exists solely to protect a funeral home cartel that routinely sells caskets for more than twice the price these retail stores charge.

"Requiring us to go through this training,"

argues an incensed Craigmiles, "makes as

much sense as requiring the [same from the] hearse driver or the person who sells the tombstone."

## Forging Protocols

By Charles Paul Freund

The last mystery surrounding the infamous anti-Semitic pamphlet *Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*—the identity of the 1904 hoax's author—finally has been solved. According to the Russian historian Mikhail Lepekhine, the *Protocols* were concocted by a Russian propagandist named Mathieu Golovinski as part of a monarchist scheme to persuade Czar Nicholas II that the

## SOURCES

**"There is an inherent risk of theft, misuse, and loss of drugs,"** reports the General Accounting Office in a November report, "Seized Drugs and Weapons" (available online at [www.gao.gov/new.items/ai00017.pdf](http://www.gao.gov/new.items/ai00017.pdf)), that looks at how poorly the Drug Enforcement Administration, which seized more than 275,000 kilograms of illegal drugs in fiscal year 1998, kept track of such evidence. **The report suggests that some runny noses at the DEA may not simply be due to the common cold.** "Weaknesses related to DEA's accountability over drug... evidence... included (1) incomplete and missing drug evidence documentation, including chain of custody documentation, (2) inaccurate recordkeeping of... evidence, and (3) improper accounting for drug weights, including unverified and unexplained weight differences in drug exhibits."

**"You may think you can write whatever you wish today. You may boast about your action because you defamed this or that person, but when we are dead and buried in our graves, we shall be together again."**

—Ayatollah Mohammad Emami-Kashani, warning dissident Iranian journalists during a September sermon, quoted in Volume 3, No. 4 of the *Middle East Review of International Affairs* (available online at [www.biu.ac.il/SOC/besa/meria/](http://www.biu.ac.il/SOC/besa/meria/))

and counterspying, with revolutionaries and the Czarist secret police often involved in complex duplicities. Golovinski himself changed sides after the 1917 revolution, becoming a Bolshevik propagandist.

Of course, a parallel universe of *Protocol*-believers has continued to claim that the *Protocols* are authentic, and that any evidence to the contrary is the real forgery. The leading proponent of this view was probably Nesta Webster, who wrote prolifically in the 1920s about purported Jewish conspiracies, and whose anti-revolutionary zeal may have stemmed from her belief that she had been guillotined by French revolutionaries in an earlier incarnation.

The *Protocols* remain widely sold in the Middle East, are readily available in Japan, and have lately become quite popular in the Balkans. In the U.S., reprints can be found in many Afrocentric bookstores. The *Protocols* were reprinted in their entirety in William Cooper's popular 1991 conspiracist work, *Behold a Pale Horse*, though Cooper instructed readers that "any reference to 'Jews' should be replaced with the word 'Illuminati.'"

## Forfeiting Sense

By Jesse Walker

In 1996, some Missouri highway troopers stopped a speeding Volkswagen Golf. One thing led to another, and before long they were searching the car. When they found \$24,000 in cash stored by the battery, they decided they were dealing with drug dealers and seized both the money and the vehicle. In early 1999, the latter was



## LIABILITIES

the *Protocols* in 1944.

The *Protocols* have been known to be a forgery since 1921, when *The Times* of London revealed that they had been largely copied from an 1864 political tract by a Frenchman, Maurice Joly. That work was a commentary on French politics and had nothing to do with Jews. Golovinski, working with such mystical anti-modernizers as the Holy Brotherhood, combined Joly's fantasy elements of world domination with earlier anti-Jewish and anti-Masonic material to produce "evidence" of an overarching Jewish-Masonic plot. Late-Imperial Russia was awash in documentary forgeries, domestic spying,

capitalist modernization of Russia was really a Jewish plot to control the world. Golovinski's handiwork—24 subversive "protocols" that purport to be the minutes of a secret "Zionist" conclave—was to become a bulwark of anti-Semitic paranoia and an essential text of Nazism. The *Protocols* remain dear to credulous paranoids throughout the world.

Historian Lepekhine discovered Golovinski's authorship in Russia's long-closed archives and published his findings last November in the French newsweekly *L'Express*. Golovinski had been linked to the work before: The German writer Konrad Heiden identified him as an author of