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FBI demands counter-terrorism law FISA be renewed after using it to illegally search 300,000 Americans

The FBI was slammed for using the statute to "conduct hundreds of thousands of warrantless searches of Americans' communications each year."

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Jarryd Jaeger
Vancouver, BC

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Officials at the [Federal Bureau of Investigation](#) are calling on Congress to ensure that a digital surveillance statute set to expire at the end of the year be renewed, despite the fact it was "misused" nearly 300,000 times on Americans who took part in the [January 6](#) and Black Lives Matter riots.

The Section 702 statute of the [Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act](#) was enacted in 2008, and gives the US government the ability to "acquire foreign intelligence information from individual terrorists, weapons proliferators, hackers, and other foreign intelligence targets located overseas who operate using US electronic communications service providers." While it has been praised in the past as an important tool in the fight against terrorism, its use on American citizens has been widely criticized.



As [Reuters](#) reports, a hearing has been scheduled by the Senate judiciary committee officials sounding off beforehand.

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"Permitting 702 to lapse, or to see it renewed in a diminished or unusable form would really raise grave national security risks," one member of the Biden administration said. "It's not just useful or important or helpful; at this point, it is vital to addressing a wide array of national security challenges."

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On Monday, a group of 21 organizations, including the Center for Democracy and Technology, released a [joint statement](#) calling on Congress not to renew the statute without implementing "critical reforms."

The group slammed the FBI for using the statute to "conduct hundreds of thousands of warrantless searches of Americans' communications each year."

In May, it was revealed that the FBI misused the [Section 702](#) electronic database over 278,000 times between 2020 and 2021 against crime victims, those who took part in the January 6 and George Floyd riots, and 19,000 donors to a congressional candidate.

The FBI blamed the use of the statute to target Americans on "confusion historically about what the query standard was."

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