

Obama Signs Bill Creating “Amber Alert” System for Violence Against Police Officers

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On Tuesday, President Barack Obama [signed a new bill](#) intended to help keep better track of violent attacks against law enforcement. [S.665](#) is also known as the Rafael Ramos and Wenjian Liu National Blue Alert Act of 2015, named for [two NYPD officers killed late last year](#). It will set up infrastructure at the local, state, and federal level to keep meticulous track of acts committed against police. According to Congress' website, the bill will create a Department of Justice-sponsored “Blue Alert” system, which [mirrors the Amber Alert system](#) created to locate abducted children.

The [bill defines](#) “Blue Alert” as

...information sent through the network relating to: (1) the serious injury or death of a law enforcement officer in the line of duty, (2) an officer who is missing in connection with the officer's official duties, or (3) an imminent and credible threat that an individual intends to cause the serious injury or death of a law enforcement officer.

On one hand, there is already a system in place to record the deaths of police officers. The FBI issues a [national, annual report](#) that details the number of officers killed and attacked (it also lists accidental deaths). Last year, [51 officers were killed](#) on the job.

Absent from the new bill was any attempt to record the numbers of murders committed by law enforcement. The deficiency in recording these figures is far more severe than recording deaths of cops. This is because the only numbers the federal government keeps on civilians are reported on a voluntary basis by local departments. Out of 17,000 local departments in America, [only about 750 report heir data](#). In contrast, there is a high probability that departments are more eager to report the deaths of their own than the ones they cause.

Though there have been calls to keep better numbers on civilian deaths at the hands of police, Congress is evidently more concerned with several dozen murdered police officers than with the thousands of civilians who have lost their lives due to the authoritarianism this bill aims to protect.

Perhaps most concerning is the component of the bill that will keep tabs on “imminent and credible threats” made against law enforcement. As with many laws, the language of this bill is exceptionally vague. Left up to interpretation, this could result in increased monitoring and control of freedom of expression beyond what already occurs. As if local police departments and the federal government did not have [enough leeway](#) to [monitor speech](#),

further authorization is now codified and implicitly criminalized.

This seems to be overkill, considering [multiple individuals](#) have been [arrested for making the exact same “threats”](#) noted in the bill. Though S.665 does not establish punishment for such offenses, it sets up a solid framework to target those who make statements the government does not approve of.

Most ironically, the law establishes “standards that specifically provide for the protection of the civil liberties of law enforcement officers and their families.” The bill predictably makes no mention of the variety of civil liberties violations that police commit, from spying to ignoring due process to killing unarmed and non-violent individuals.

While it is no surprise that the government is concerned with keeping track of violence against their own agents, it is a disturbing implication that there is no motivation to do the same for the citizens Congress allegedly represents.

Carey Wedler writes for [TheAntiMedia.org](#), where this article [first appeared](#). Tune in! The [Anti-Media radio show](#) airs Monday through Friday @ 11pm Eastern/8pm Pacific. Help us fix our typos: edits@theantimedia.org.

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