

Lawmaker Wants Times Prosecuted

By Devlin Barrett
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The chairman of the House Homeland Security Committee urged the Bush administration yesterday to seek criminal charges against newspapers that reported on a secret financial-monitoring program used to trace terrorists.

[Rep. Peter T. King](#) (R-N.Y.) cited the New York Times in particular for publishing a report last week saying that the Treasury Department is working with the CIA to examine an international database of money-transfer records.

King said he will write Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales, urging that the nation's chief law enforcer "begin an investigation and prosecution of the New York Times -- the reporters, the editors and the publisher."

"We're at war, and for the Times to release information about secret operations and methods is treasonous," King said.

The chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, [Arlen Specter](#) (R-Pa.), did not endorse King's action. "On the basis of the newspaper article, I think it's premature to call for a prosecution of the New York Times, just like I think it's premature to say that the administration is entirely correct," he said on "Fox News Sunday."

Reports about the money-monitoring program appeared last week in other leading newspapers. King said they should also be investigated.

When the Times published its report, it quoted the executive editor, Bill Keller, as saying editors had listened to the government's arguments but thought it was "a matter of public interest."

In a letter printed yesterday on the Times Web site, Keller said the administration argued "in a half-hearted way."

He noted that after the report was published, the Treasury Department "trumpeted . . . that the U.S. makes every effort to track international financing of terror. Terror financiers know this, which is why they have already moved as much as they can to cruder methods. But they also continue to use the international banking system, because it is immeasurably more efficient than toting suitcases of cash."