



Written by [Brian Koenig](#) on June 13, 2012

Congress Asks DOJ to Investigate “SWAT-ing” on Conservative Bloggers

In efforts to intimidate and suppress the speech of prominent conservative bloggers, opponents are implementing a decade-old technique called “SWAT-ing,” which involves prank callers phoning law-enforcement authorities and reporting a violent crime at someone’s home. The pranksters generally camouflage their actual phone numbers — by making them appear to originate from the victim’s home — leading SWAT teams to be dispatched to a person’s residence.



Beginning last July, several renowned conservative bloggers have been reporting incidences where prank calls led SWAT teams to their doorsteps. Around since the early 2000s, SWAT-ing is oftentimes revenge-motivated, affirmed FBI agent Kevin Kolbye, who has been involved in probing such cases. “They’re usually retaliatory in nature to harass or terrorize the intended party. It’s really kind of similar to the old hoax bomb threat,” he [explained](#). “But in a SWAT-ing, you’re masking or hiding the ... phone number and causing a SWAT response by stating that they’ve murdered someone in the house or they have hostages in the house.”

“There’s been hundreds of SWAT-ing instances where SWAT teams have come up to innocent third parties,” he added. “It’s putting innocent people at risk. It’s just a matter of time [before] we believe someone could get hurt.”

Patrick Frey, an L.A. County deputy district attorney and blogger at his website [Patterico’s Pontifications](#), described his harrowing SWAT-ing experience that took place in the middle of the night on July 1, 2011. “They were pointing guns at me,” Frey recounted. “They put handcuffs on me, they were screaming questions at me like, ‘Is anybody inside? Are they alive? I was telling them, ‘Yeah, my family is inside sleeping. My wife is upstairs. My children are upstairs in their bedrooms.’”

Erick Erickson of [RedState.com](#) described a similar incident in his Macon, Georgia, home over a Memorial Day weekend. On the [audio](#) of a prank call, a person can be heard telling the Bibb County Sheriff’s Department that he had shot his wife and would “shoot someone else soon.”

“Tonight, my family was sitting around the kitchen table eating dinner when sheriff’s deputies pulled up in the driveway. Someone called 911 from my address claiming there had been an accidental shooting,” Erickson reported on his blog. “It wasn’t nearly the trauma that Patterico suffered, but I guess the Erickson household is on somebody’s radar.”

Some bloggers allege that Brett Kimberlin, the “Speedway Bomber” who was convicted in 1978 for eight bombings in Speedway, Indiana, is behind these heinous schemes. In describing Kimberlin’s past, *Time* magazine [reported](#) in 2007:

Brett Kimberlin was convicted in 1981 of a series of bombings in Indiana. By his own account, he dealt “many, many tons” of marijuana in the 1970s. Most famously, he is the man who from his prison cell alleged that as a law student Dan Quayle bought marijuana from him. Quayle repeatedly



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denied the charge, and it was never substantiated. In e-mails and Web postings from Kimberlin's two organizations, Justice Through Music and Velvet Revolution, he intersperses occasionally useful pieces of information about the problems of e-voting with a hefty portion of bunk, repeatedly asserting as fact things that are not true.

Kimberlin, who was released from prison in 2001, now heads the Velvet Revolution, a network of 100 liberal organizations that promote "progressive change" in the United States. While there is no definitive evidence that Kimberlin is involved, several bloggers claim they were SWAT-ed immediately following blog posts that described Kimberlin's past crimes and progressive political ideology.

"Any blogger — conservative and liberal alike — who has written the truth about Kimberlin has come under vicious attack by either Kimberlin or his minions, suffering death threats (veiled and unveiled), multiple lawsuits, loss of jobs and worse," [wrote](#) The Blaze's Tiffany Gabbay.

Sen. Saxby Chambliss (R-Ga.) recently got involved, sending a [letter](#) to the Justice Department requesting that Attorney General Eric Holder "determine whether any federal laws may have been violated." Chambliss noted in his letter that the prank callers are using voice over IP (VOIP) to make the call seem as though it originated from the target's residence. "The use of SWAT-ting as a harassment tool is apparently not new, but its use as a tool for targeting political speech appears to be a more recent development," Chambliss wrote. "The emerging pattern is both disturbing and dangerous."

Rep. Kenny Marchant (R-Texas) also joined in the fray, [telling](#) Holder he is "very afraid of the potential chilling effects that these reported actions may have in silencing individuals who would otherwise be inclined to exercise their Constitutional right to free speech." Furthermore, the conservative free speech law firm American Center for Law and Justice said it will provide legal representation to the National Bloggers Club, a media coalition that has raised money for targets of SWAT-ing and other coordinated harassment ploys.

More than 80 other members of Congress have joined the cause, writing letters to Holder asking him to investigate these dangerous harassment schemes that are haunting many conservative bloggers. "Differences of opinion should enrich our lives, not divide us," one letter read. "Each American has the right to freely express his or her ideas and should not be subject to fear tactics like SWAT-ing, which run counter to the liberty that forms the bedrock of our great nation. These crimes are not to be tolerated and necessitate thorough examination at every level."

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