

# **WorldWatch**

**by Staff**

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## **Global Spy Network**

Though Britain and America officially deny its existence, a global spying network can eavesdrop on every phone call, fax or e-mail, anywhere on the planet. The BBC has confirmation from the Australian government that such a network really does exist, and politicians on both sides of the Atlantic are calling for an inquiry. Republican Congressman Bob Barr has persuaded Congress to open hearings into these and other allegations. The power of the network, code-named Echelon, is astounding. Every international telephone call, fax, e-mail, or radio transmission can be listened to by powerful computers capable of voice recognition. They home in on a long list of key words, or patterns of messages, looking for evidence of international crime, like terrorism.

## **Environment**

According to its third annual fishing report, the U.S. Commerce Department has classified a record number of species as overfished. The report found 98 species are overfished—up from 90 last year—and another five are nearing that category. Since last year, 18 species were added to the overfished category; ten were removed. Meanwhile, the status of more than 670 other species is unknown. The net increase in overfished species might reflect a new, more complicated definition of overfishing, which considers both mortality rates for a species and stock size. A fishery is now considered overfished if fish are being caught faster than the stock can replenish itself, or if the stock size is too small to be fished at current levels.

## **European Unity**

Europe must unite in preparation for the new century, and Germany must learn the lessons of its dark history, says former German Chancellor Helmut Kohl. Receiving an honorary doctorate from the Weizmann Institute of Science, Kohl warned those gathered for the ceremony that extremist groups were emerging in Europe and must be countered.

## **Agriculture**

British farmers are spreading thousands of tons of human sewage on arable and grazing land, risking the contamination of food with bacteria and toxic metals, an investigation has revealed. Scientists warn that a danger exists that the sewage could be consumed by cattle and enter the food chain. The sludge contains salmonella, E. coli, lead and mercury, which can live up to 100 days in the soil.

## **Y2K**

An FBI report says the threat of violence by extremists to mark the new millennium is "very real," *The Washington Post* reports. The bureau says that it will share the report, entitled Project Megiddo, with police chiefs. The document analyzes "the potential for extremist criminal activity in the United States by individuals or domestic groups who attach special significance to the year 2000."

## **Technology**

A high-tech bracelet will eventually make the leather wallet and credit cards obsolete, if NCR Corporation has its way. The flexible 25-mm-wide M-Bracelet contains computer circuitry to receive, process and transmit data. It stores electronic credit cards, so the wearer can use the bracelet to pay for groceries or collect cash from an ATM machine by touching a receptor. In addition, two bracelet wearers can exchange information and messages with a handshake.

## **Medicine**

Transplant patients who receive pigs' hearts and lungs will have to sign a pledge never to have children, *The London Telegraph* reports. They will also have to agree to have their current and future sexual partners registered and monitored by the medical authorities. The contracts are part of a series of stringent safeguards being drawn up by Britain's regulatory body on animal-human transplants to try to ensure that pig viruses do not spread to humans.