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Patriot Act Game Pokes Fun at Government

By WAYNE PARRY

The Associated Press

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HAMILTON, N.J. -- In this send-up of "Monopoly," players don't pass "Go" and they don't go directly to jail _ they go to Guantanamo Bay.

Instead of losing cash for landing on certain squares, they lose civil liberties. And the "Mr. Monopoly" character at the center of the board is replaced by a scowling former Attorney General John Ashcroft.

"Patriot Act: The Home Version" pokes fun at "the historic abuse of governmental powers" by the recently renewed anti-terrorism law, according to its creator's Web site.

But while it may be fun, creator Michael Kabbash, a graphic artist and Arab civil rights advocate, is serious about how he feels the law has curtailed Americans' freedom.

The object of the game is not to amass the most money or real estate, but to be the last player to retain civil liberties.

"I've had people complain to me that when they play, nobody wins. They say 'We're all in Guantanamo and nobody has any civil liberties left,'" he said. "I'm like 'Yeah, that's the point.'"

The real Patriot Act, passed after the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks and renewed earlier this month, gave law enforcement new investigative and prosecutorial powers. Critics say it unacceptably impinges on civil liberties, but the government defends the law as a vital tool that has helped prevent another terror attack.

Kabbash decided to keep Ashcroft as the visual focus of the game, even though he stepped down in January 2005, because "he really is the icon that people associate with the Patriot Act."

In a nod to President Bush's prewar comments, the "Go" space in is renamed "Bring It On!" Players roll the dice to determine how many civil liberties they start out with, accumulating them from a variety of categories: U.S. citizens get 5; non-citizens 1. Whites and Asians get 5; Arabs 1. Ultra right-wingers get 6; Democrats 3 or 4.

Instead of landing on, say Oriental Avenue, players land on a color-coded spaces corresponding to the national terror alert. A player who lands on a red space loses one civil liberty, as does anyone else within five spaces. A player who lands on an orange space gets to designate another player to lose one civil liberty.

"Chance" cards are now "Homeland Security Cards," with orders such as, "FBI wants you for questioning; Lose one turn;" and "You provide the local authorities with speculative information on your next door neighbor; Collect one civil liberty from each player."

Kabbash, of Green Brook, created a few full board sets but is also distributing the game free over the Internet, with the game board and playing cards all printable. More than 2,000 copies have been downloaded since it debuted in 2004.

"I wanted it to be not only a parody but a teaching tool," said Kabbash, 38, who teaches graphics at the

College of New Jersey. "This is my way of putting my political ideas forward, hoping people will wake up. There's a lot of apathy, and we have to realize that we're in a democracy, that we're all allowed to say something."

Ashcroft had no comment on the game when asked about it Saturday during a crime conference in Miami Gardens, Fla., but he laughed when told "jail" had been replaced with Guantanamo Bay. U.S. Justice Department public affairs did not immediately return a call Saturday seeking comment.

Kabbash says his next project will probably have something to do with the National Security Agency's domestic eavesdropping program. He is reasonably certain "there's a file on me somewhere."

Asked if the FBI keeps a file on Kabbash, a bureau spokesman refused to comment.

Associated Press Writer Jessica Gresko in Miami Gardens, Fla., contributed to this report.

On the Net:

Game: <http://www.graphix4change.com/>

Patriot Act: <http://www.lifeandliberty.gov/>

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International

Don't pass Go, go to Guantánamo

Julian Borger in Washington

Monday March 20, 2006

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It may look like Monopoly, but there are no hotels or £200 handouts for passing Go. Instead, in a spoof version of the venerable game for the post-9/11 era, players dice with homeland security cards and civil liberties. And they don't go to jail. They get sent to Guantánamo Bay.

The game - Patriot Act: The Home Version - was designed by Michael Kabbash, an Arab-American graphic artist, and distributed through his website, graphix4change.com.

The board mimics Monopoly, but at its centre is the image of John Ashcroft, the former attorney general who shepherded the US patriot act into law in 2001 in the face of protests that it infringed civil rights in the name of security.

He also appears in one of the corner squares brandishing the scales of justice and thundering "Go to Gitmo!" in big red letters. Gitmo is US military jargon for the Guantánamo Bay military base and its detention camp in Cuba. The board's jail square shows a kneeling detainee in an orange bodysuit with a brown hood over his head. "Gitmo Bay detentions", it reads, "No visitors".

The game's pewter playing pieces consist of an oil well, the constitution, a radio microphone, a cowboy hat, a plane, and a dollar sign.

The starting square is emblazoned with the words "Bring it on!", echoing a phrase used by George Bush in defiance of attacks in July 2003.

The game begins with each player rolling dice to acquire a "profile" of citizenship, ethnicity, religion, employment and politics. The last player to "maintain his or her civil liberties" wins the game.

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Monday, Mar 20, 2006

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Posted on Mon, Mar. 20, 2006

Go directly to Gitmo; do not collect \$200

An Arab civil-rights advocate and graphic designer from N.J. has given Monopoly a political makeover.

By Wayne Parry
Associated Press

HAMILTON, N.J. - In this send-up of the Monopoly board game, players don't go directly to jail; they go to Guantanamo Bay.

They don't lose cash by landing on certain squares; they lose civil liberties. A scowling former Attorney General John Ashcroft dominates the center of the board.

Chance cards read like this: "Held for extended questioning! Either lose one civil liberty, or decide which player you turn in to authorities (they lose two civil liberties)."

Designed by a New Jersey graphic artist and Arab civil-rights advocate, Patriot Act: The Home Version pokes fun at "the historic abuse of governmental powers" by the renewed antiterrorism law.

While the game may be fun, creator Michael Kabbash of Green Brook is serious about how he feels the law has curtailed freedom. The object of the game is not to amass the most money or real estate but to be the last player to retain civil liberties.

"I've had people complain to me that when they play, nobody wins. They say, 'We're all in Guantanamo, and nobody has any civil liberties left,'" he said. "I'm like, 'Yeah, that's the point.'"

Congress passed the Patriot Act in the weeks after the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks and gave law enforcement some additional investigative and prosecutorial powers. Critics say it unacceptably impinges on civil liberties, granting investigators the right to examine people's library and medical records, among other things.

But the government defends the law as a vital tool that has helped prevent another terror attack. When the bill was renewed this month, Attorney General Alberto Gonzalez said, "The 89-10 bipartisan vote illustrates an understanding that the Patriot Act has kept us safer while protecting the civil liberties we cherish."

Ashcroft, in Florida for a conference, would not comment Saturday - but laughed when told that players went to Guantanamo instead of jail.

Kabbash decided to keep Ashcroft, who stepped down in January 2005, as the game's visual focus because "he really is the icon that people associate with the Patriot Act."

In a nod to President Bush's prewar comments, the "Go" space in this game is renamed "Bring It On!"

Players roll the dice to determine how many civil liberties they start out with, accumulated from a variety of categories. U.S. citizens get five; noncitizens get one. Whites and Asians get five; Arabs get one. Christians get five or six, Jews get four, and Muslims get two or three. Ultra right-wingers get six; Democrats get three or four.

Instead of landing on, say, Oriental Avenue, a player lands on a color-coded space corresponding to the national terror alert. If he lands on a red space, he loses one civil liberty, as does anyone else within five spaces of him. If he lands on an orange space, he selects another player to lose one civil liberty.

The jail has been replaced by Guantanamo Bay - an automatic loss of three civil liberties. Chance cards have become Homeland Security cards and say, for instance, "FBI wants you for questioning; lose one turn."

Kabbash, 38, a Christian whose grandparents came to the United States from Syria, teaches graphics at the College of New Jersey outside Trenton. He has produced parodies of popular cereal boxes in the past.

He is distributing this game free over the Internet, with the game board and playing cards all printable. More than 2,000 copies have been downloaded since its debut in 2004.

Kabbash said he wanted his game to be as widely available as possible.

"I wanted it to be not only a parody but a teaching tool," he said. "This is my way of putting my political ideas forward, hoping people will wake up. There's a lot of apathy, and we have to realize that we're in a democracy, that we're all allowed to say something."

Get the Game

For a free download, go to www.graphix4change.com

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