

Government's invasion of privacy

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“ The Transportation Security Administration wants to see you naked” (“ The TSA Wants”).

As the people of today’s country realize the corruption in the government is taking its toll, privacy rises as one of the most prominent issues. The government has abused its powers by invading citizens’ privacy through the use of prevalent modern day technology and the enactment of administrative policies, particularly the USA Patriot Act. The U. S House of Representatives hastily passed Bill 3612 which created the USA Patriot Act as a reaction to the September 11 terrorist attacks. The Act minimized the restrictions in the enforcement of law and was targeted at terrorists that resided within U. S.

borders. However, the enactment of this bill has resulted in an invasion of privacy, as well as in the elimination of the notion that all people are innocent until proven guilty. Some people believe that the government is justified in using technology and legislation that may trespass personal bounds in order to provide protection, such as the controversial and debated USA Patriot Act. A supporter of this Act, Kevin Ryan, the attorney general for the Northern District of California, stated that his first priority was “ the protection of this district from a terrorist attack.” He believed this priority could only be reached by passing the USA Patriot Act.

Some people agree with Ryan, and believe the Act is constitutional as it protects citizens’ from terrorism. However, the Act invades people’s privacy by allowing the government to access a person’s credit card or bank account numbers (Terrell). The Act also adds to the hysteria of terrorism and results

in the spread of paranoia. Likewise, the Patriot Act received undeserving credit for results it was meant to achieve. The terrorist incidents chart blazoned by www.fbi.gov

shows the number of terrorist attacks that occurred from 1985 through 2005 (“Terrorist Incidents in the”). As the graph demonstrates, there has been a steadily declining number of terrorist attacks, a trend which was initiated long before the USA Patriot Act was enacted in 2001. There can be many reasons leading to this minuscule drop, such as the war waged after the attacks; however, the decrease has been improperly ascribed to the USA Patriot Act. Furthermore, the misuse of technology such as the millimeter wave scanner, otherwise known as the body scanner found in airports, has become a transit to the impediment of privacy. Body scanners are not mandatory; however, if a person objects to being scanned, they are subject to a pat-down that allegedly does not violate one’s personal bounds (Pucci).

Conversely, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) reported that body scanners, in fact, result in violations of the Constitution, specifically the Fourth Amendment which protects against unreasonable searches (Rosen). Regardless of this objection, a Supreme Court decision, based on the prospect of terrorism, protects the use of such technology under the USA Patriot Act. Similarly, surveillance cameras, which were initially placed in numerous public arenas for security reasons, have allowed instances of government corruption. The government has deemed that the purpose of these cameras is to act “as deterrent for petty thieves” (Dutta).

Therefore, despite the actual ineffectiveness of these cameras, there remains support for their use. Consequently, the American public is exposed to a widespread violation of privacy because these cameras are now so technologically advanced that they have nearly perfect facial recognition skills (Spooky). Furthermore, they have been unnecessarily used to protect against criminal activity in private locations, as stressed in the case against Wal-Mart's placement of surveillance cameras in bathrooms (Zetter). Additionally, the USA Patriot Act is the brainchild of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA). Under FISA, the government is not required to provide notice or obtain a warrant to conduct searches.

The USA Patriot Act “ broadened the scope” of FISA, as it allows searches based entirely on what the government believes to be a significant purpose. (Terrell). This violates Amendment V of the U. S Constitution which states that the government cannot deprive citizens of “ life, liberty or property” without Due Process of law. Meaning the government cannot “ skip parts of trials, or deny citizens their rights as protected by the Bill of Rights and by law” (“ Americapedia”). Regardless of the protection provided by the U.

S Constitution, the USA Patriot Act allows the government to access citizens' private credit card information and bank account numbers; something that was impossible prior to this law (Terrell). This is the one way the Act trespasses on the bounds set by the law of the land, the U. S Constitution, for the supposed protection from terrorism. Technology arose as a pathway for the government to encroach on one's personal space. One piece of technology that is prevalent in today's world is surveillance cameras.

Surveillance cameras have been tampered with due to a lack of regulation and ease of access. Men are able to purchase modern security cameras that can be manipulated and used for illegal and intrusive reasons. For example, many camera systems have been used by men to “spy” on women. In fact, ten percent of females have been found to be targeted for voyeuristic reasons (“What’s Wrong with”). The placement of security cameras is not unconstitutional, but the way people use them is. Moreover, these types of cameras have proven to be ineffective.

Criminologists noted that “there was no evidence to suggest that these cameras had reduced crime overall in the city centre.” Also, basic lessons in psychology can explain the insignificance of security cameras. Experts on security technology found that after twenty minutes of viewing camera footage, a person’s attention deteriorates to “well below acceptable levels” (“What’s Wrong with”). As concluded by these experts, security cameras are essentially futile. Amendment IV of the Bill of Rights to the United States Constitution states “the right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized” (“Fourth Amendment”).

The government has subsidized these basic rights and as a result, disregarded citizens’ right to privacy. The passing of the USA Patriot Act not only violated the U. S. Constitution, but made the trespassing of rights much more probable. The Act does not efficiently guard citizens’ against terrorism; rather, it just makes them more susceptible to privacy issues.

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Technology has been used to abuse the USA Patriot Act, making it a gateway for the government's invasion of citizens' privacy. The Act needs to have firm restrictions on how the government can exercise their powers without intruding on citizens' intrinsic rights. If this exploitation continues, it can lead to a greater destruction of the fundamental U. S ideals that are stated in the original U. S. doctrine of republicanism.

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