Good essay about national security agency

Law, Security

NSA2

Introduction

The United States National Security Agency is responsible for counterintelligence operations pertaining to the monitoring, collection, and analysis of global data (National Security Agency, 2014). These counterintelligence operations include eavesdropping, wiretapping, and other types of electronic surveillance used to intercept threat against the United States. In recent decades, the NSA has also assumed responsibility for all counterintelligence operations for cyber and network warfare. Due to the changes faces of terrorism, the NSA counterterrorism strategies must also adapt to new threats posed to the United States.

Counterterrorism Tools

In the Information Age, terrorists possess the ability to deliver computer viruses through a telephone line or wireless connection, and they can successfully intercept, decipher, and destroy information and data obtained through cyber communications (Taylor, Fritsch, Liederbach, & Holt, 2011). Terrorist organizations are likely to practice technological facilitation because cyberterrorism is more anonymous than traditional terrorist methods, and similar to traditional Internet users, many terrorists hide their factual identities and personal information from security and law enforcement agencies (Weimann, 2004). Additionally, terrorists go to great lengths to keep their identities hidden so as to avoid hindering any information pertaining to their planning and coordinating attacks.

The NSA utilizes an abundance of counterterrorism tools to keep Americans

safe from possible terrorist threats. Interception and deciphering data is an important tool used against terrorists and their associated groups. Additionally, counterterrorism tools and tactics used for

NSA3

network and cyber warfare are among the most popular being utilized by the NSA. Intelligence experts suggest that terrorists and terrorist groups will continue using the internet as a means of attack against the United States. While both domestic and international hackers have posed security threats in the past, threats to our nation’s infrastructure remain the most prevalent. New and innovative counterterrorism approaches are being implemented to help curb the nation’s vulnerability (Margulies, 2014). In fact, the network and cyber warfare department is the largest addition to the agency since its creation. This sector of counterterrorism intelligence will continue to grow as global networking mobility continues to increase. Similar to other surveillance legal issues, however, there are few laws regarding the NSA and the American government’s right to track, store, and potentially use, an individual’s history of their online activities.

NSA and Department of Homeland Security

Most commonly, the NSA interacts with the Department of Homeland Security to perform counterterrorism operations. This collaboration began in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks and has continues flourishing until present day. The 2001 PATRIOT Act, which formally established the NSA’s sister department, the Department of Homeland Security, greatly expanded the jurisdiction of the NSA in terms of data and information methods of data

collection (Margulies, 2014). In addition, the NSA and Department of Homeland Security partner to conduct investigations on potential terrorist threats and plots.

Overall, at least 30 valid terrorist plots have been foiled due to the NSA and Department of Homeland Security's collaborative counterterrorism tactics (National Security Agency, 2014).

NSA4

Most commonly, information and data received by the NSA is provided to the Department of Homeland Security so on-the-ground investigations can begin. In particular situations, the two agencies have partnered with local agencies to expose terrorists by using audio, video, and online surveillance to expose potential threats. Most importantly, the two agencies constantly exchange both domestic and global data and information in attempts to stay aware of all possible threats.

Justice Implications

Regardless of the long-withstanding history and effectiveness of the NSA, the agency has not escaped scandal and controversy over the years. Most recently, and perhaps the agency's biggest conflict within the justice arena, is the Edward Snowden scandal. It was alleged that the NSA was not solely collected information regarding Americans that may be linked to terrorist and terrorist groups, but that the NSA actively stores data and information, and tracks all American citizens at all times (Margulies, 2014). Understandably, this has raised numerous right-to-privacy issues, especially regarding the use of information and data sent and stored over the internet,

personal computers, and most specifically, cellular telephones. The 2001 PATRIOT Act, as previously mentioned, widened the NSA's ability to track online activities. President Obama resigned the PATRIOT Act, reiterating its necessity for utilizing counterterrorism strategies.

One of the primary reasons that experts have been so concerned with provisions of the PATRIOT Act are due to the NSA becoming deeply involved in domestic intelligence when they were an agency designed to monitor foreign operations. However, due to the widening of the NSA's responsibilities to maintain the safety of American's infrastructure, as previously

NSA5

mentioned, it appears as though their jurisdiction has also widened to include domestic operations as well. The main justice problem here is that the law has currently failed to keep up with ever-changing policies regarding domestic wiretapping, eavesdropping, and other types of surveillance.

NSA and First Responders

Conclusion

Historically, the role and mission of the NSA has greatly changes since its creation, but its core purpose, to keep Americans safe from foreign threats, still hold true. While more Americans do become critics of the tools and practices used by the NSA to collect information and store data, experts do not see these policies changing due to the constant threat of terrorism and cyberterrorism. The NSA promises to remain transparent in their proceedings, but as long as the actual identities of terrorists groups and their

affiliates can remain hidden, so too will tactics utilized by the NSA and other intelligence agencies to ensure American safety.

NSA6

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