

Term paper on the use of domestic electronic surveillance by the usfg is not bene...

[Society](#), [Terrorism](#)



Introduction

Of course, terrorism has now become an issue of global concern. The mushrooming of the terrorist groups has posed a very great challenge to the global community. The inhuman attacks by the Al Qaeda, Taliban, Tamil Tigers, Al Shabaab and Boko Haram have resulted into the loss of innocent lives. As a military super power, the ' United States of America (USA) has been the main target for terrorism' (Balousek, 2000). As a country, USA has suffered in the hands of the Islamist extremists who have successfully bombed it on several occasions.

The most significant turning point in the history of this country is the 9/9 attack. The twin bombing of the World Trade Centre prompted the federal government to come up with stringent anti-terrorism measures such as the domestic electronic surveillance. Under this program, the National Security Agency advocated for the massive track down of the mass media. There was to be a vigilant collection of data on the people's use of phone calls, emails and credit cards. However, good it might be, this program has been criticized for compromising the privacy and liberty rights of the American citizens.

Advantages

The following are the advantages of this program to the people and government of the USA:

First, it was enacted to protect the Americans from terrorism. Since the primary goal of the government is to protect its citizens, the federal government was obliged to come up with such a policy to ensure the safety of its citizens. Having realized that terrorism was a reality, the government

had to act with speed so as to eradicate it. This would be an absolute way of realizing such a goal.

Secondly, NSA was convinced that domestic electronic surveillance would be instrumental in the collection of data. As a large nation, it would be quite challenging for the security agencies to carry out physical investigations. The tracking of daily records on the Americans' phone calls and emails would help in getting information about the terrorists. It was believed that the terrorists could use any of these platforms to secretly communicate their plans.

Lastly, NSA believed in the role of quantity information. The daily tracking of over 3 billion phone calls would provide adequate information to the government. The simple logic is that the more the data, the higher the chances of getting leading information about the terrorists. Thus, it is necessary to launch a rigorous surveillance to cover all the Americans.

Disadvantages

Despite its intensions, domestic electronic surveillance has been criticized for its ineffectiveness. It has been faulted on moral, constitutional and technological grounds. To many people, it has been misused to advance exclusive political ideologies in the country. The following are some of its drawbacks:

First, it is an expensive program. The implementation of this program requires a lot of funds. As a complicated technology, electronic surveillance requires the use of tools, materials and gadgets which may be costly to acquire. At the same time, it needs a team of highly trained personnel. With

the increasing number of telephone users, it is not easy to track and monitor the communications of 3 billion people. obviously, this makes the program inappropriate because it wastes the country's resources which would otherwise be used in viable development agenda. Indeed, this is against the principle of democracy which calls for the provision of social and political security. Instead of investing such huge finances on this program, they can be used to sponsor the development of roads, schools, housing, hospitals and offer essential social services to the taxpayers. After all, this money should be wisely spent because it is theirs.

Besides, domestic electronic surveillance infringes fundamental rights of the Americans. As a democratic nation, the American constitution guarantees individuals right to privacy. Meaning, each person has to feel secure in private dealings such business and communication. At no one time should such a freedom be compromised. However, the use of electronic technology to spy on personal phone calls, emails and private homes violates this right. In fact, it makes people feel more insecure than they should otherwise be. As a mature democracy, US should not engage in such acts. It denies the Americans the freedom to engage in their private activities. Everyone should be granted an opportunity to enjoy their privacy without much interference. The rights of the law abiding citizens should not be interfered with for the sake of securing their safety which is of course, made more insecure.

Moreover, it is a misplaced ideology introduced by the government to deal with specific sections of the society. Instead of using it as a security tool, domestic electronic surveillance has been used to advance political partisan agenda. Since the government has a capacity to monitor the privacy of

everyone, it can be in a position of monitoring the activities of critics and other extremist groups. According to Delgado, this has promoted the 'discrimination of people like Muslims who are closely inked to terrorism' (p 117). However, this is a very unfortunate stereotype which should not be used to justify discrimination which is against the principles of democracy. Lastly, domestic electronic surveillance is an ineffective and time consuming exercise. It is a misplaced idea which diverts the attention of the security personnel. It is a very tedious activity to monitor all the phone calls in the larger America. Instead of looking for the real terrorists wherever they may be, a lot of energy is spent on monitoring law abiding citizens. Therefore, the government should recruit spies and informers to investigate the suspected terrorists and hand them over to the relevant law enforcers.

My stand

Based on the above facts, I would like assert that domestic electronic surveillance is not a good idea. It is not beneficial to maintaining our democratic beliefs. First, it compromises our liberty rights. The ' monitoring of personal communications is an unlawful act' (Bamford, 2007). It denies the Americans the privacy they deserve. The most unfortunate thing is that most of the people whose private information is accessed are innocent law abiding citizens who should be protected. However, the government intentionally opts to meddle into the private lives of these people. In my opinion, it is inappropriate to subject people to such an exercise because it makes no one feel secure.

In addition, I would like to point out that the use of domestic electronic

surveillance is not beneficial to maintaining our democratic beliefs. A part from violating our privacy rights, it interferes with the democratic process in the country. The government has taken advantage of terrorism to promote discriminatory practices in the country. Surveillance program has been accused of selectively targeting certain sections of the society. It has been used to target the extremist groups such as the Muslims, Christians and conservatives. Meaning, it has been used as a political tool to monitor the activities of critics and collaborators. However, I would like to say that this is a very unfortunate situation. Risen and Lichtblau, say that it makes American be considered as a discriminative society which propagates exclusionist ideologies for the benefits of the government. This is dictatorial and should not be condoned.

In conclusion, I would like stress that electronic surveillance is not a good thing. It is unhealthy for the prosperity of the country. In my point of view, it should not be continued because it infringes our rights and freedoms. I believe that it is not morally right to monitor day to day communications of all the citizens. The government has mechanisms to catch up with suspected terrorist wherever they are. It is a harmful activity which should be stopped. It is not necessary to jeopardize the security of all Americans for the sake of tracing known specific terrorists. Instead, as Thomas Drake and Russell Tice say, surveillance should be conducted in a more privacy compliant manner. After all, it is a clear knowledge that the terrorists do not use normal telephone and internet servers such Skype, Google, Gmail and Yahoo while conducting their illegal activities. This is the only way through which we can

fight terrorism and promote democracy to make American a conducive place for all the citizens.

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