



## Just Because I'm Paranoid...

By: Reid Smith – June 6, 2013

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Matt Purple offers stark contrast between Sen. Rand Paul's portrayal of an "assault on the Constitution," and Sen. Lindsey Graham's predictable giddiness at our ever-expanding surveillance state.

Matt makes a great point. These days, our expectations of privacy are especially flimsy. In fairness, that's partly our own fault. Decisions made in the digital age require a personal gut-check every time your iPhone offers you a push notification. Now more than ever, we must conduct our lives with a healthy dose of common sense and personal responsibility.

But government overreach is at an all-time high. NSA's snooping represents a fraction of the much larger menace. Your privacy is in peril.

Last night—before this most recent scandal broke—I sat on a civil liberties panel with Jim Harper of the Cato Institute. I think he offers the best definition of privacy...precise for its parsimony. He has written, "properly defined, privacy is the subjective condition people experience when they have power to control information about themselves."

Now, an Obama administration that promised transparency, unprecedented, is actively eroding your power of discretion. (Don't get me wrong, the W. Bush White House was absolutely culpable, too. But say what you will about their "threat-level-magenta-daily-dose-of -fear-!" routine. At least they were frank about it.)

This government is all over you and your privacy from cradle to grave. But the institutionalized (and unnerving) tendency of the Feds to warehouse your information shouldn't come as a shock.

Obviously, it's virtually impossible to comprehend the behaviors and boundaries of an American surveillance state, and the NSA scandal is uniquely shocking. But consider this in context...

The federal government starts harvesting complex, affective data in your child's kindergarten classroom thanks to evolving Common Core standards. The 1790 census—authorized by Article 1, Section 2 of the U.S. Constitution—asked six simple questions. Somehow that's evolved into an intrusion of farcical proportions—yet failure to comply might mean a census official peering through your window. Proposed background checks have opened the door for a national gun registry. The FAA has cleared drones for take-off across the friendly skies by 2015. DNA swabs are taken prior to criminal conviction, to be stored in perpetuity...

Maybe you think I'm a little paranoid. Or perhaps you subscribe to the uniquely pliant maxim "if you have nothing to hide, you have nothing to fear."

Think there's potential for abuse when Obama's shadowy Federal Data Service opens for business? "Why!?" you ask, "it's just the most expansive human database in American history! What could go wrong?"

I'm not exaggerating. *The Wall Street Journal* has called it "the largest personal information database the government has ever attempted." We're facing open enrollment in ObamaCare, and we don't know who will have access to the oceans of data collected from our most personal health records.

If the recent IRS scandal taught us anything it's that our naïve dependence on virtuous bureaucrats gives them entirely too much discretion over our lives.

I don't know about you, but none of this makes me feel any safer. Plus, I look damn good in my tin-foil hat.