



Schumer calls on feds to eye jihadist use of social media

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U.S. Sen. Chuck Schumer Sunday called on federal officials for a fresh assessment on how suspected terrorists use social media like Twitter, Instagram and Facebook to better understand how they may be thwarted.

“There is nothing wrong — and everything right — with scanning Facebook, Twitter and Instagram and other accounts for keywords like ‘jihad,’ ‘mass shooting,’ ‘pipe bombs’ and more,” Schumer said at a news conference in his midtown Manhattan office.

Schumer pointed to the Dec. 2 attacks in San Bernardino, California, by husband-and-wife jihadists who killed 14 people. The couple had communicated about martyrdom and jihad, although they did so through private messaging, not public social media postings.

Schumer said he’d like to enlist the nation’s spy agencies, including the CIA and National Security Agency, “to help share their expertise.”

“We already know how to do this type of tech reconnaissance,” Schumer said. “We just need to perfect it.”

His spokesman, Angelo Roefaro, said the bill has yet to be introduced in the Senate but would likely resemble H.R. 3654, the Combat Terrorist Use of Social Media Act of 2015, which was sponsored by Texas Republican Rep. Ted Poe and passed by unanimous voice vote Dec. 16 in the House of Representatives.

“Terrorists use social media to recruit Americans, inspire lone wolf attacks and even raise money,” Schumer’s office said.

The bill requires the Obama administration to study subjects like how terrorists use social media, what role the technology plays “in radicalization” and how to use social media “for counter-radicalization and counter-propaganda purposes.”

Julian Sanchez, a senior fellow at the libertarian-leaning Cato Institute who studies privacy, technology and civil liberties, said the Schumer legislation is “probably harmless” but its backers’ rhetoric suggests “they’d like to do more radical things that would be objectionable.”

Those things, Sanchez said, could include more aggressive monitoring, blocking or censorship of online jihadist speech. That would be unconstitutional unless it targets only imminent lawless action, he added.