



Reasons to fight back today

By Jeremy Kolassa

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There comes a point when people just can't take it anymore, when frustration and anger boil over into public displays. Two years ago, that anger manifested in the national protests against SOPA and PIPA, and led to stopping those laws in their tracks. Today, it will manifest again in another protest—The Day We Fight Back.

Organized by a broad coalition of entities such as Demand Progress, the ACLU, Electronic Frontier Foundation, Mozilla (creators of the Firefox browser), Reddit and even the Libertarian Party, [The Day We Fight Back](#) aims to stop—or at least impede—warrantless NSA spying on Americans and, indeed, all people. Thousands of websites will display banners against spying. Calls will be made to lawmakers. There may even be physical protests. At least, that is the intention.

Will it work? It's certainly possible. The SOPA Blackout Day did the trick, although it certainly helps when Wikipedia and a host of other popular websites black themselves out in protest. I don't see Wikipedia on The Day We Fight Back website, so it's possible that this campaign will not have as visceral an effect.

Then again, that's not really the point. The point is that our civil liberties are being violated. Our privacy is being invaded. Our government now oversees a security apparatus that appears to have jumped straight out of the pages of *1984*, not from the parchment of the U.S. Constitution. While most people don't think we'll be recreating the East German Stasi here in America, do we even want to risk that chance?

Supporters of NSA spying—or at least, critics of the criticism—may rightfully point out that, thanks to social media, we share more details about our lives than ever before. That's true, but the key is that we *choose* to share them. Not everyone blurts out everything about themselves. Most people are selective. We can present different images to different people. In that way, we can shield our core identity and be ourselves. If we lose our expectation to privacy, with all our secrets laid bare, things change. We start to censor ourselves even when we're alone, start to conform to the crowds, all to avoid potential ostracism. [There are huge psychological effects.](#)

Worse, if we don't care, then our apathy begins to breed even worse excesses of government. Do you remember all the people on Twitter saying they have nothing to hide? As Julian Sanchez of Cato notes, [this sort of attitude poisons us](#) by leading us to feel not just toleration, but resignation.

Don't believe the argument that "it's just metadata, it doesn't invade your privacy." Metadata [can tell an awful lot about a person](#)—where you go, who you meet, what you do. Moreover, [the government does collect your content](#). They have your phone conversations. The metadata is secondary.

On top of this, FBI agents [can turn on your computer's webcam without you knowing](#), and the NSA has [actually intercepted computer orders and other electronics](#) in order to attach tracking devices and spy on buyers.

There are serious consequences for a society that accepts mass surveillance. None of those consequences are good. Today's day of action will hopefully jolt this nation into awareness. It is far past time to stop this nightmare. Let us act now to restore the liberties that are the birthright of every American, and rebuild that shining city on the hill we all wish to live in.