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Obama wants to unscramble our private communications

DAVID GOMEZ | Fri 8th Oct 2010, 12:17 pm

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America has been known as the military-industrial complex for decades now, so it's not surprising that the post 9/11 national security state has created big brother problems.

But what you may not know is that the American brand of technological spying has become a global problem.

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The current political administration in America is interested in changing the Internet and other digital communications to make them easier to use to spy on people. And like it says in the Cato Institute article by [Julian Sanchez](#) which originally appeared in the American Prospect, the government's plan most likely won't do much to hinder criminals or terrorists.

It will, however, threaten the stability of our digital [communication networks](#) and it will stifle technological innovation. All because the Obama Administration wants the telecoms, online services, and software companies to build back doors into their systems.

That's right. Apparently, President Obama is a back door man, at least when it comes to communication systems.

A back door like the one the Obama administration will ask for next year would give government and law enforcement the ability to unscramble our private communications. Foreign communications companies who do business in the US will have to fly on over and build local facilities just so the government can spy on their customers easier.

According to the Cato article this legislation will create difficulties for services like Skype. They would have to end up redesigning their system to allow the government to have access. This would leave their network less secure and take away some of the flexibility of the system.

The [Internet](#) is just one factor in the government surveillance phenomenon. There are also x-ray spy vans in play.

The Department of Homeland Security has recently purchased 500 x-ray vans called ZBVs, with tax payer dollars. They can scan cars, trucks and homes without anyone knowing they are being x-rayed.

The company that produces them, American Science & Engineering equips the vans with a Z Backscatter x-ray device, hence the name ZBV. [Dave Lindorff](#) reported in an article that these devices can penetrate through 14 inches of steel. The beam is supposed to be safe for humans but there are flaws that have been pointed out in photographs from the van.

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In the pictures made available to public you can see into trucks and vans, you can see where the bad guys would maybe hide drugs, or illegal aliens. In fact it is pretty clear that the x-rays penetrate too deeply because you can see outlines of people's forms in the pictures suggesting that maybe the rays are getting through into the subjects bodies after all.

AS&E has said that the rays shouldn't be harmful to humans because the rays will usually be dispersed by the metal of vehicles it looks into.

But what about when the powerful ray is used to look into houses for badguys? Houses are usually made of wood and offer little protection for the innocent people that may be inside of buildings.

And in Lindorff's article a prominent physicist outlines several possible scenarios where the machine could malfunction and become dangerous. Components of the machines could wear down with heavy use of these machines in secret. Without proper maintenance of its inner workings the van's heavy x-ray beam could fry people with too many x-rays.

And like all government employees, we also have to worry if the people operating these machines have been trained how to do their job properly. That could create dangers with ZBVs as well.

Another physicist brings up whether or not the ZBV is safe to use around children or pregnant women. The research data that shows the ZBV is safe to use on adult sized subjects. But so far it seems like nobody can give a good answer about what risk it would pose to children or fetuses in the womb.

As this information becomes public in the US we also find out that the United Kingdom has issues with [technology](#) and surveillance as well.

A website has emerged in the UK called **Internet Eyes** and they are willing to pay up to £1,000 (\$1594.90) to subscribers who regularly report suspicious activity like shoplifting. Of course critics in the UK feel that this is a sleazy way to make a profit, not to mention that encouraging citizens to spy on each other is detrimental to society.

Additionally, in the **Daily Mail** it was reported that schools children in the Northamptonshire, Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire regions now have to deal with camera systems that scan the children's faces as they enter school. They say it's to keep children from coming to school late. In the future it may also be used to keep teachers in line too.

As it says in the story, Britons already live with the most electronic surveillance by the government in the world. Now they face a facial recognition system to deal with in their schools.

When I was in the Marines my world was smaller than it is now. As I served in a post 9/11 world I thought that only the US could have such problems with spying on the [technology](#) of private citizens. I mean we accepted the Patriot Act with open arms.

As I woke up to the world around me I began to realize that the loss of privacy via [technology](#) was something that all powerful nations are experiencing. I still wonder though, why is there so much spying in the most industrialized nations in the world?

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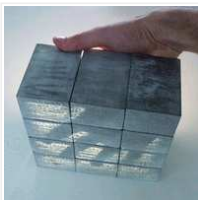
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