1984 Is Here: Big Brother in the Electronic Age

Pervasive Spying on Americans. Moore's Law, Cheap Electronics and Homeland Security Money Combine to Create Big Brother

By Washington's Blog
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Washington's Blog

We extensively documented last week that Americans are the most spied upon people in world history.

Yesterday, the Wall Street Journal gave a glimpse of a small part of the pervasive spying:

> Top U.S. intelligence officials gathered in the White House Situation Room in March to debate a controversial proposal. Counterterrorism officials wanted to create a government dragnet, sweeping up millions of records about U.S. citizens—even people suspected of no crime.

Why is this happening?

Technology … and money.

Specifically, Moore's law says that computing power doubles every two years. Computer processing and storage are advancing so quickly that massive quantities of visual and auditory data can be gathered, analyzed and stored.

Moreover, high-quality videocams and microphones keep getting cheaper and cheaper. Today, most people shoot video with their smartphone, and alot of people have webcams on the computers.

At the same time, the Department of Homeland Security is giving huge amounts of cash to local governments to obtain military hardware and software.

These 3 trends – increased computing power, cheaper videocams and microphones, and government funding for "homeland security" purposes – has led to a 1984 style surveillance society.

As Wired reports:

> Transit authorities in cities across the country are quietly installing microphone-enabled surveillance systems on public buses that would give them the ability to record and store private conversations....
>
> The systems are being installed in San Francisco, Baltimore, and other cities with funding from the Department of Homeland Security in some cases ....
>
> The IP audio-video systems can be accessed remotely via a built-in web server

(.pdf), and can be combined with GPS data to track the movement of buses and passengers throughout the city.

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The systems use cables or WiFi to **pair audio conversations with camera images in order to produce synchronous recordings. Audio and video can be monitored in real-time**, but are also stored onboard in blackbox-like devices, generally for 30 days, for later retrieval. Four to six cameras with mics are generally installed throughout a bus, including one near the driver and one on the exterior of the bus.

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Privacy and security expert Ashkan Soltani told the Daily that the audio could easily be coupled with facial recognition systems or audio recognition technology to identify passengers caught on the recordings.

RT [notes](#):

Street lights that can spy installed in some American cities

America welcomes a new brand of smart street lightning systems: energy-efficient, long-lasting, complete with LED screens to show ads. They can also spy on citizens in a way George Orwell would not have imagined in his worst nightmare.

With a price tag of $3,000+ apiece, according to an ABC report, the street lights are now being rolled out in Detroit, Chicago and Pittsburgh, and may soon mushroom all across the country.

Part of the Intellistreets systems made by the company Illuminating Concepts, they have **a number of "homeland security applications" attached**.

Each has a microprocessor "essentially similar to an iPhone," capable of [wireless](#) communication. Each can capture images and count people for the police through a digital camera, record conversations of passers-by and even give voice commands thanks to a built-in speaker.

Ron Harwood, president and founder of Illuminating Concepts, says he eyed the creation of such a system after the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the Hurricane Katrina disaster. He is **"working with Homeland Security" to deliver his dream of making people "more informed and safer."**

Fox news notes that the government is [insisting that "black boxes" be installed in cars](#) to track your location.

The TSA has moved way past airports, trains and sports stadiums, and is [deploying mobile scanners](#) to spy on people all over the place. This means that traveling within the United States is [no longer a private affair](#). (And they're probably bluffing, but the Department of Homeland Security claims they will soon be able to know your adrenaline level, what you ate for breakfast and what you're thinking … [from 164 feet away](#).)

And Verizon has applied for a patent that would allow your television to [track what you are doing, who you are with, what objects you're holding, and what type of mood you're in](#).

Given Verizon and other major carriers responded to [at least 1.3 million law enforcement requests](#) for cell phone locations and other data in 2011, such information would not be kept private. (And some folks could be spying on you through your tv using [existing technology](#).)

Thanks to Moore's law, cheap electronics and the all-pervasive "homeland security" state, Big Brother is here.

Postscript: George Orwell was not the only one to foresee pervasive high-tech surveillance. National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski [wrote](#) in [1970](#):

> The [future] era involves the gradual appearance of a more controlled society. Such a society would be dominated by an elite, unrestrained by traditional values. Soon it will be possible to assert almost continuous surveillance over every citizen and maintain up-to-date complete files containing even the most personal information about the citizen. These files will be subject to instantaneous retrieval by the authorities.

*And the national security boys can choose to share U.S. civilian information with federal, state, local, or **[foreign entities** for analysis of possible criminal behavior, **even if there is no reason to suspect them**](#).*

Fortunately, Big Brother is a gentle soul who would never hurt a fly. [Oh, wait](#) … [never mind](#).

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