

CONNECT to the topic page 72

Host Mary Tsui: Today—an important topic: surveillance. Now the issue of governments using surveillance on their citizens is a growing and controversial issue. While governments claim that surveillance exists to protect citizens, to assure their safety, opponents say it inevitably violates an individual's right to privacy—a fundamental right in a free and democratic society. Today, many people feel that governments are going too far in their attempts to monitor the behavior of their citizens. And many believe officials are using national security and public safety as an excuse to collect information on citizens for other purposes, and, most importantly perhaps, collecting that information illegally. So, are people right to feel worried or threatened? Well, with me is a friend and former colleague, Gavin Swenson, an expert on civil liberties. Gavin, is there really evidence of governments behaving inappropriately here?

Guest Gavin Swenson: I think so, yes, certainly here in the US. Actually, the legal authority of the National Security Agency, or NSA, to spy on Americans is quite limited, and that essentially means that a lot of what seems to be going on is, in fact, questionable, legally speaking. And allegedly, it's widespread and often without cause. And let's be clear: We're not just talking about video cameras in the streets and in shopping malls recording people's every move.

Host: No?

Guest: No. We're talking about Internet record collection on a phenomenal scale; about harvesting 40 billion—that's 40 billion—Internet records every month without a warrant; about 2,776 incidences of the NSA overstepping its legal authority, according to a 2012 internal audit of its own activities in the DC-area spy centers alone. These aren't my figures. They're the NSA's own figures.

Host: Forty billion sounds like an awful lot. What sort of records are we talking about?

Guest: Records of people's emails, Mary. Records of online searches, websites visited, attached documents sent. You name it. They seize nearly everything we do on the Internet—a pretty disturbing thought.

Host: And there's been a lot of talk of phone calls being monitored.

Guest: Again, the figures paint a disturbing picture, with some reports suggesting that the government is also gathering information on the 3 billion phone calls made in the US every day, with large telecommunications companies turning over metadata on every call they've processed.

Host: Metadata being ...

Guest: ... basically the details of those phone calls—the phone numbers of the parties, date and time, length of call and so on—on every call they've processed.

Host: Fascinating stuff indeed. Let's take a break. When we come back: drones ...

BUILD your vocabulary page 73

- 1 civil liberties: Civil liberties are the rights and freedoms people have in society.
- 2 commercial: Commercial means having to do with business or trade.
- 3 composite: Composite means made up of different parts or materials.
- 4 controversial: Something that is controversial causes a lot of disagreement.
- 5 deterrent: A deterrent is a way of stopping people from doing something.
- 6 security: Security refers to measures taken by agencies to protect us.
- 7 sophisticated: If something is sophisticated, it's advanced or complex.
- 8 suspected: Somebody who is suspected is believed to be responsible for doing something wrong.
- 9 techniques: Techniques are particular methods or ways of doing something.
- 10 via: Via means through, by, or by way of—for example, "She flew from Prague to New York via London."

FOCUS your attention page 75

Speaker: Now let's look at figures. A report by the New York Civil Liberties Union, entitled "Who's Watching?" claims that there were a total of 2,397 surveillance cameras in all of Manhattan ten years ago. And that now there are that many cameras in just one area: Greenwich Village and SoHo. Apparently, the cameras have been a highly effective crime-fighting tool, reducing crime in the area by more than a third. The Metropolitan Transportation Authority now plans to spend up to \$250 million on cameras for the city's subway system. And the New York City Police Department has requested funding for about 400 digital video cameras to help combat robberies and burglaries. Additionally, it has received \$9.8 million from the Federal Department of Homeland Security to help create a linked system of cameras that can be operated from a control center. Surveillance Camera Players—a New York City-based anti-camera group—

is concerned by these developments. They've quoted camera growth-rates of 300, 500, and even 1,400 percent, depending on the neighborhood. Those are really substantial increases ...

WATCH the lecture page 76

Professor Colin Edwards: E01 One controversial aspect of civil liberties we haven't touched on yet is surveillance. Let's start with a definition so we know what we're talking about: Surveillance is the act of carefully watching a person or place, especially one that's suspected. Well, I'm sure we all have our own opinions on this. **E02** Civil liberties groups in most countries are concerned that we're becoming a so-called "surveillance culture"—that in the name of national and personal security, national governments are obtaining detailed information on their citizens and tracking their movements, Internet use, financial transactions, and so on. And it's not just the government. Today it's possible for savvy private organizations to get information on individuals from different sources and build a kind of composite picture—a profile, if you will. Some people think that this is fine. If it helps the government, or if their local supermarket knows their shopping habits, they shouldn't have anything to hide, right? But most people don't like it. They feel they've become part of an Orwellian "Big Brother" culture—that it's a gross intrusion of privacy. **E03** Are they right? Well, you can judge for yourselves because I'm going to take you through some of the surveillance mechanisms that are out there. We'll start by looking at a few of the more familiar ones. And then move on to some more recent and technically sophisticated methods. First up: Cameras. Today, these are everywhere: Closed-circuit TV cameras are in stores monitoring shoplifters, in cash machines identifying fraud gangs, and on public transportation watching vandals and thugs. But of course, they're also watching perfectly ordinary, innocent people like you and me going about their daily lives, completely unaware that they're being monitored. You know, today in the US, for example, there are probably upwards of 6 million surveillance cameras. In New York City alone, they've increased 50 percent in the past few years. And in Britain that figure is 6.5 million cameras. That's about one camera for every ten people recording each citizen up to 300 times a day! Then there are traffic-based cameras monitoring vehicles via their registration numbers. Right now, the UK government is considering recording all car journeys taken on main roads, as a deterrent to terrorism and crime generally. These cameras are being used way beyond their original purpose—it's downright invasive. **E04** Then we have credit card transactions. We're all familiar with this one, I'm sure. Every time we use a credit or debit card, we're making an announcement of where we are, how much we're spending, and on what. Again, useful for crime-busting when, say,

unusually large amounts of money are suddenly spent uncharacteristically. But do we really want people to know this stuff? Do we want just anyone having access to our financial records? **E05** Next up, biometric facial recognition, which uses computer programs to analyze images of human faces for identification purposes. And this is done by taking an image, say, from a photo or video frame, then measuring facial characteristics, like the distance between your eyes and the length of your nose, for instance. Then they create a template which the software can compare with another image, like of a person going through airport security. If there's a match, then, hey, presto, that person gets pulled aside for questioning. They've got this system operating at a number of airports. It's also been used at major sporting events like the Olympics and the Super Bowl, where pictures were taken of every person entering the stadium and then compared against a database. **E06** OK, let's look at a couple of more recent and sophisticated surveillance techniques: cell phone surveillance technology and drones. Now, the police using records of incoming and outgoing cell phone calls to solve crimes is pretty old news, right? But recently things have taken a more ominous turn in the form of cell phone surveillance technology. There is now a sophisticated, portable spy device able to track cell phone signals inside vehicles, homes, and insulated buildings. These trackers act as fake cell phone towers, allowing police or other government investigators to pinpoint the location of a targeted cell phone by extracting email and other data from it. When a suspect makes a call, the device tricks the phone into sending its signal back to the police. Which is OK if the user is a criminal; however, the device also extracts data off thousands of other cell phones in the area. **E07** Finally there are drones. Now drones are small, camera-equipped quadcopters—basically fancy mini-helicopters; you now see them in a lot of places. They've become increasingly fashionable and some people simply see them as extravagant toys. But—and it's a big but—these "toys" can also have a dark side to them. Already, drones are used in some airports to allow authorities to monitor events on the ground, deter crime, and identify offenders. And drone footage has been used to solve crimes—same as closed-circuit TV cameras. And some of us may see that as acceptable. But get this: Anybody—and I do mean *anybody*—can buy one of these drones, and there's nothing really stopping them from spying on whoever they wish. And although there's legislation governing their use, most people are either unaware of it or ignorant of it. So again, there's another real potential threat to our privacy, our civil liberties. **E08** Now, all the instances of surveillance I've mentioned—closed-circuit TV cameras, credit card tracking, biometric facial recognition, phone surveillance, and drones,—they're all products of the digital age, of technology that's now so easily available, that it's just too simple and tempting for security agencies and commercial

organizations not to take advantage of it. And here's the catch: Just to function in today's world requires us, increasingly, to expose ourselves to these threats against our privacy. We basically have no choice. Let's face it, how many of us these days can really manage without a credit card, an ID card, email, or a cell phone? It's almost as if, well, if we want to have these things, then we have to accept the surveillance that goes with them, right? **E09** Now I'm no conspiracy theorist, but, like many people, I don't believe all this surveillance is for our own good. I don't believe that those of us who have nothing to hide have nothing to fear. So it's reassuring that there are organizations out there protecting the rights of ordinary citizens like you and me. Let me wrap up with a quote from Marc Rotenberg, president of the Electronic Privacy Information Center, or EPIC, who says that the kind of "open-ended surveillance" we are now seeing is, quote, "the digital electronic equivalent of allowing police to go through your home without a warrant." Now that's a sobering thought, wouldn't you say?

HEAR the language page 78

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- 2 Today it's possible for savvy private organizations to get information on individuals from different sources and build a kind of composite picture—a profile, if you will.
- 3 Closed-circuit TV cameras are in stores monitoring shoplifters, in cash machines identifying fraud gangs, and on public transportation watching vandals and thugs.
- 4 But of course, they're also watching perfectly ordinary, innocent people like you and me going about their daily lives, completely unaware that they're being monitored.
- 5 Right now, the UK government is considering recording all car journeys taken on main roads, as a deterrent to terrorism and crime generally.
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- 7 Next up, biometric facial recognition, which uses computer programs to analyze images of human faces for identification purposes.
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- 9 Now drones are small, camera-equipped quadcopters—basically fancy mini-helicopters; you now see them in a lot of places.
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TALK about the topic page 79

Ben: All right, is everybody here? Cool. So just to be clear, today we're going to discuss surveillance as a group. And then sharing our thoughts next class. Right?

Shelley: Yeah, that's right. And, as I understand, we also want to try to agree on a group view. Right?

Hugh: Yes. But that might be difficult. I don't know about you guys, but I don't, I'm not even sure how I feel about it.

Kenzie: Well, I know how I feel. I hate the whole idea of surveillance. Like, you know, when I'm innocently walking down the street or browsing in a store and I see those things pointing right at me.

Ben: Yeah, I mean, I think we all feel a little uneasy.

Kenzie: No, not just uneasy. I feel *offended*. Like they suspect me. Like they're accusing me of something. For no reason!

Shelley: If I can say something. I hear what you're saying, Kenzie. But personally, I have a little different view. I mean, all of us we travel by bus or subway, right? Don't you feel safer knowing somebody's keeping an eye on what's happening—on the train, the platform, the bus?

Hugh: I do. I think people are less likely to do something strange—attack you, steal your money—if they know someone's watching.

Shelley: Yeah, exactly. I mean, basically, they know they'll probably be identified. So they don't do it.

Hugh: Yeah, yeah, right. It's a prevention measure. Is that the right word? Preventing measure?

Ben: You'd say *preventative measure*.

Hugh: OK, preventative measure. And apparently it works. Surveillance cameras have cut crime in public places.

Kenzie: Well, maybe. I get that. But it's still an invasion of my privacy. And that's a basic human right, as far as I'm concerned. We all have a right to privacy, don't we?

Hugh: Well, yes, sometimes.

Shelley: Not really, not in a public setting.

Ben: Look, we all feel a bit differently. But is there any middle ground—any position we can all agree on?