

Government Monitoring of Electronic Communications

Social Science Grade 8 Performance Task

Student Name: _____

Student ID: _____

School: _____

Teacher Name: _____

Task Description

For this performance task you will act as a historian. First, you will read a variety of primary and secondary sources. Then, you will use these sources to explain and analyze the response of the United States government to the attacks on September 11th, 2001.

Task Overview

You will read and analyze the documents provided in this packet, and use the documents to analyze the responses of the United States government regarding the attacks on September 11th, 2001. Keeping that in mind, consider the question **“Does the government have the right to monitor our electronic communications?”**

Historical Context

On the morning of September 11th, 2001, the United States was attacked in two locations by religious extremists associated with the al-Qaeda terrorist organization. One location was the World Trade Center buildings in New York City, and the second location was the Pentagon building (the United States headquarters for the Department of Defense) in Washington, D.C. During these attacks, multiple airplanes were hijacked. Two of the airplanes were flown into the Twin Towers at the World Trade Center complex in New York City. A third plane was flown into the side of the Pentagon building, while a fourth plane that was hijacked crashed into a remote field in Pennsylvania.

Almost three thousand people were killed, and there was billions of dollars of property damage done to the areas that were attacked. As a response to the attacks, the United States changed its policy towards fighting terrorism. One of the government’s responses was to begin monitoring electronic communications of United States citizens. This sparked outrage amongst many people, while some argued that it was the government’s responsibility to protect its citizens and should have access to these types of communications. The following documents will provide insight into both sides of the argument to this topic.

Directions

1. Read documents 1 – 4 closely.
2. After reading the documents you will respond to all parts of this task. Be sure to cite evidence from documents in your answers to the questions.
3. Once you have finished, review your work.

You have 45 minutes to complete this assessment.

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Vocabulary	
Word	Definition
NSA	National Security Agency – Responsible for monitoring information and data for intelligence purposes
efficient	Performing in the best possible manner with the least waste of time and effort
query	A question
mosque	A Muslim temple or place of public worship
propaganda	Information, ideas, or rumors spread widely to help or harm a person, group, etc.

Task Activity

Document 1:

ACLU Info Graphic



Source: "It's Time for a Privacy Update!" *American Civil Liberties Union*. N.p., n.d. Web. 10 Feb. 2015.

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Document 2:

Excerpts from “Three American teens, recruited online, are caught trying to join the Islamic State” *Washington Post, December 8, 2014*

“Mohammed Hamzah Khan, 19, rose before dawn on Oct. 4 to pray with his father and 16-year-old brother at their neighborhood mosque in a Chicago suburb.

When they returned home just before 6 a.m., the father went back to bed and the Khan teens secretly launched a plan they had been hatching for months: to abandon their family and country and travel to Syria to join the Islamic State.

While his parents slept, Khan gathered three newly issued U.S. passports and \$2,600 worth of airline tickets to Turkey that he had gotten for himself, his brother and their 17-year-old sister. The three teens slipped out of the house, called a taxi and rode to O’Hare International Airport.

This year alone, officials have detained at least 15 U.S. citizens — nine of them female — who were trying to travel to Syria to join the militants. Almost all of them were Muslims in their teens or early 20s, and almost all were arrested at airports waiting to board flights.

A senior U.S. official said the government anticipates more arrests. Authorities are closely monitoring Twitter, Facebook and other social media networks, where recruiters from the Islamic State aggressively target youths as young as 14.

“Their propaganda is unusually slick. They are broadcasting their poison in something like 23 languages,” FBI Director James B. Comey said in a recent speech, adding that the terrorist group is trying to attract “both fighters and people who would be the spouses . . . to their warped world.”

When the Khan teens reached the airport, FBI officials were waiting for them.

A U.S. law enforcement official said authorities had been monitoring the communications of at least one of the teens, although the FBI has not disclosed how they initially became aware of them.

Source: Sullivan, Kevin. "Three American Teens, Recruited Online, Are Caught Trying to Join the Islamic State." *Washington Post*. The Washington Post, 8 Dec. 2014. Web. 10 Feb. 2015.

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Document 3:

Article from *The Guardian Online*, August 11, 2013

"The NSA appears to believe this general monitoring of our electronic communications is justified because the entire process takes, in one official's words, "a small number of seconds". Translation: the NSA thinks it can intercept and then read Americans' emails so long as the intrusion is swift, efficient and silent.

That is not how the fourth amendment works.

Whether the NSA inspects and retains these messages for years, or only searches through them once before moving on, the invasion of Americans' privacy is real and immediate. There is no "five-second rule" for fourth amendment violations: the US constitution does not excuse these bulk searches simply because they happen in the blink of an eye."

Source: Abdo, Alexander, and Patrick Toomey. "The NSA Is Turning the Internet into a Total Surveillance System." *The Guardian*. N.p., 11 Aug. 2013. Web. 10 Feb. 2015.

Document 4: Article from *The Blaze*, June 10, 2013

"Terrorists don't have armies or navies we can track with satellites. There are only three ways we can get information to prevent terrorist attacks:

The first is interrogation — getting the terrorists to tell us their plans. But thanks to Barack Obama, we don't do that anymore. The second is penetration, either by infiltrating agents into al-Qaeda or by recruiting operatives from within the enemy's ranks. This is incredibly hard — and it got much harder, thanks to the leak exposing a double agent, recruited in London by British intelligence, who had penetrated al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and helped us break up a new underwear bomb plot in Yemen — forcing the extraction of the agent.

That leaves signals intelligence — monitoring the enemy's phone calls and Internet communications — as our principal source of intelligence to stop terrorist plots. Now the same critics who demanded Obama end CIA interrogations are outraged that he is using signals intelligence to track the terrorists. Well, without interrogations or signals intelligence, how exactly is he supposed to protect the country?"

Source: Howerton, Jason. "Here Is the Pro-NSA Surveillance Argument." *The Blaze*. N.p., 10 June 2013. Web. 31 Mar. 2015.

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Part 1: Using documents 1 - 4, identify which are primary sources and which are secondary sources. Be sure to cite evidence to support your answer.

Document 1:

Document 2:

Document 3:

Document 4:

Part 2: Describe which source you find to be the most reliable. Explain why you feel this way.

Part 3: Describe which source you find to be the least reliable. Explain why you feel this way.



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Part 4: Do you feel that the government has the right to monitor our electronic communications? Explain why or why not. Please explain your response to the question using evidence from the four documents.