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## [Social Media On or Off Security Radar Screen?](#)

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According to a recent Congressional publication a Department of Homeland Security program manual indicates intelligence analysts have been instructed to monitor social network communications beyond situational awareness. The manual lists a series of categories for analysts to examine social media related to someone's view on government policies, for example.

While CEN cannot confirm any specific reports that the information gathered by DHS through monitoring social networks has in any way expanded from situational awareness the manual of instructions do call the question: Should social media be on or off the security intelligence radar screen?

Social media is used prolifically and we recently we viewed how it was used to overthrow long standing governments and leaders who had largely rested upon authoritarian political and relational infrastructures to support their influence and control. Whereas, in the U. S. we have trusted the U.S. Constitution to protect and defend the freedoms and rights we hold dear. It is the framework and sustainable "glue" which protects and defends those same rights.

Social media on the other hand can transmit a viral message, leaping over and penetrates through using just one communication channel, begging into question all forms of civil organization - top down and bottom up management structures, authoritarian or autonomous, moral, values, and even commonly held social traditions and etiquette.

Society as a result of this communication phenomena may benefit in an expansion of freedom and ability to communicate, yet with all freedoms like social media comes responsibility. We have seen the use of social media in emergency response to save lives, but we have also seen it devastate lives.

In a world now questioning every decision-making authority, who sets the responsibility standard for our social media? Historically, the mores and values were codified in a working and functional standard set by the religious and civil communities coming into alignment. For example, in the U.S. this was how the U.S. Constitution, a civil legal structure became the agreed upon law of the land, and it was based Judeo-Christian principles. The religious principles were agreed upon as the acceptable standard of a free and civil society. However, today, once accepted religious principles are now being replaced by other principles such as humanism threatening the very foundation that U.S. law rests upon.

Is the question whether our government security analysts should or should not be monitoring social media beyond situational awareness the question at hand, or is a problem much deeper - who or what is the standard for a free society related to social media and other behavioral choices for that matter?

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Richard Hartman, COO of OhMyGov, Inc., argues in support of government monitoring of social media. Hartman writes, "Monitoring and analyzing terrorist conversations to gain actionable intelligence is simply the low hanging fruit that agencies can pick to aid their missions." He argues that such monitoring can improve situational awareness and emergency response, aid in the early analysis of disease outbreaks, and save money through program evaluations. Hartman adds, "Social media analysis uses aggregated data. This type of aggregated data, where personally identifiable information is not included, is critical to informing government operational effectiveness and can save a lot of money by identifying where resources should be spent to fix or solve problems." However, Richard Hartman seems to be viewing this debate from a government perspective alone, not individual freedom and rights.

Conversely, those who argue in favor of protecting rights may argue in favor of DHS or any government agency having no authority to have the right to monitor social media. If we take that to its conclusion, how is a governing agency commissioned to do its job to protect the homeland if only selective information is provided to them? It would be like asking someone to take on an armed assailant and tying their hands behind their back.

Is the question DHS over stepping its bounds, or even it's need to have the ability to aggregate data in order to protect and defend the nation? Or, have we been so busy communicating and becoming enamored seeing what social media can do, we failed to agree how and under what authority do we protect and defend our freedoms? What or who is the basis for how we protect and defend the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness both here and abroad?

What do you think on this topic from a Christian worldview?