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## ETIPS & TRAPS: Concept of privacy on Web is nothing but a delusion

Bill Murray and Andy Thibault Published 12:00 am, Saturday, February 11, 2012

Maybe **Philip K. Dick** wasn't imagining a high-tech, invasive government after all. Maybe he was just a better observer than most.

Dick's world of PreCrime surveillance and detention has been with us -- in reality -- for quite some time.

The only question is, how long a time?

In a recent incident with the department, the case of the young European tourists tweeted to jail and deportation stands out.

Their PreCrime: suspicion of planning to commit crimes. It seems watching the U.S. comedy show "The **Family Guy**," while an enjoyable pastime for visitors **Leigh Van Bryan** and Emily Bunting, is not a favored pastime for certain government agents.

Those same agents, however, have become enamored of Twitter and other social media.

They spent significant time focusing on Van Bryan weeks before his trip from Great Britain when he quoted a "Family Guy" episode in a tweet: "3 weeks today, we're totally in LA p\*ssing people off and diggin' **Marilyn Monroe** up!"

While the president was pushing tourism to the U.S. as a major economic driver, the agents devised plans to look for hidden shovels in the couple's baggage.

The agents didn't want to hear about it when Van Bryan tried to explain that the word "destroy" in another tweet -- "free this week for gossip/prep before I got and destroy America" -- was British slang for partying.

Both would-be tourists were held in jail cells for 12 hours before being sent home.

On the retail front, advertisers are experimenting with displays that can identify the age and gender of passers-by, then adjust marketing content for viewers.

Many people do not realize that postings on the internet -- at least for the time being -- are permanent. Even when posts are deleted, the information is saved. Google or Bing routinely add posts to their indexes.

Quite simply, the concept of privacy on the internet is a delusion.

Governments, meanwhile, continue to be aggressive in their data mining efforts -- overtly and covertly. Twitter was ordered to give the U.S. Department of Justice ostensibly private data of WikiLeaks supporters and a warrantless search was granted.

The state of New York recently issued a subpoena to Twitter for the personal account information of **Occupy Wall Street** organizer **Malcolm Harris**.

Twitter defied a gag order not to disclose the subpoena.

In a pervasive surveillance state, everyone is a suspect.

Twitter was not so bold last month when it adopted a policy to censor tweets at the request of governments.

"Thank you for the #censorship, #twitter, with love from the governments of #Syria, #Bahrain, #Iran, #Turkey, #China, #Saudi and friends," wrote **Bjorn Nilsson**, a user in Sweden, according to The **New York Times**.

Twitter followers will undoubtedly find another avenue for communication. The movement among internet users who demand that governments stop trying to undermine the free flow of information -- regardless of borders -- is virtually impossible to contain without mass arrests and incarceration.

Indeed, the high-stakes battle between governments and hacktivists escalated as the group Anonymous -- targeted internationally by law enforcement -- recorded a conference call between **Scotland Yard** and the FBI.

Anonymous played a key role in the Arab Spring uprisings and engaged in what it called revenge attacks against credit card companies that stopped payments to WikiLeaks.

The Anonymous hacker known as Phoenix told The Huffington Post: "The internet is the wild west, and Anonymous will fight against any attempt to tame it."

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