
Privacy: Why We're Not On Facebook

The [Guardian](#) has reported that Facebook has links to the CIA's venture capital firm In-Q-Tel, stating that, "[t]he US defence department and the CIA love technology because it makes spying easier." The information you put on Facebook is stored indefinitely and could be used in data-mining operations. Privacy warnings state that Facebook users consent to having their information shared – potentially with U.S. authorities.

Subscribers to our newsletter need to ensure they think carefully before signing up for any social networking sites since this information can be used against you in a number of ways. Courts can order the information, private investigators can dig it up, and if the U.S. government articulates nearly any reason at all to access your private information, you can bet there is an extremely high probability that social networking sites will turn it over to the requesting authority.



Security: Protect Yourself From Electronic Identity Theft

Any skilled thief with a portable credit card scanner can steal information from your credit cards or passport – even while your cards are secured in your wallet. Many credit cards today are contactless – meaning that you do not need to swipe them but merely tap them on the credit/debit card terminal to make your payment.

Additionally, all new U.S. passports have a radio frequency identity chip (RFID) implanted in them. The chip emits a signal that can similarly be read. Identity thieves armed with portable scanners can merely come in close proximity to you to steal your personal information and it takes less than a second to do so. Protect yourself with products designed to block RFID signals, like this RFID blocking passport holder. Click on the wallet image below for details.



Foreign Residency: Getting Your Second Residence in The Bahamas

The Bahamas continues to be a leading destination for those looking to escape the ever expanding intrusions of federal

government. But Bahamian immigration rules are designed to protect the resources of the country, while at the same time encourage economic development. So while investors are welcome there are a few things that you should know before you make the decision to relocate.

First, be prepared to fill out an embarkation-disembarkation card. You'll be asked to surrender a part of the card when leaving the country. In the wake of 9/11 everyone entering The Bahamas must have a valid passport, but US citizens, and citizens of the British Commonwealth, including Canada and Australia, do not need a visa to enter the country.

Residency

Foreign investors may purchase residential property of up to 5 acres without government approval. Every acquisition must be registered with the government under the International Persons Landholding Act, 1993. For purchases of less than 5 acres the investor must apply for a Certificate of Registration. If you are interesting in purchasing more than 5 acres then a government Permit is required. Once you have purchased your property then there are a few residence options that you may want to consider.

Permanent Residence

Those wishing to settle in The Bahamas by investing in property, retiring, or opening a business in the country will usually apply for permanent resident status. If purchasing

property valued at \$250,000 or more, permanent residence is fairly routine. Those buying a property valued at \$500,000 or more will receive accelerated consideration of their residence application. Applicants for permanent residence must be of good character, show evidence of financial support, and give a written statement confirming that they want to make The Bahamas their permanent residence. Applicants' wives and dependent children can be approved on the same application.

Annual Residence

This card is available for those who may not own a home but who intend to remain in the country for an extended period. Spouses and dependents of citizens or work permit holders and independent economic residents may apply for Annual Residence. Fees vary based on the status of the applicant.

Home Owners Residence

Home owners are entitled to apply for an annual Home Owners Residence Card. At \$500 per year the card allows the holder to enter The Bahamas and remain in the country for as long as the card is valid. The spouse and minor children of the card holder are also allowed to enter on the Home Owners Residence card.

It is important to remember that none of the above permits will give a non-Bahamian the right to work in the country. To do that, a Work Permit must be obtained.

Employment

In order for a non-Bahamian to work on the islands they must obtain a Work Permit. Each permit is valid only for that person and for the specific position for which they applied. Permits are available for key personnel, and for entrepreneurs looking to invest and/or establish a business in the country. In order to receive a permit the applicant must show that they will be a productive asset to the country. Individuals looking to establish a business are especially encouraged to apply. Fees for Work Permits can range from \$500 to \$15,000 depending on the position. These fees may be waived in the certain cases.

Banking

A bank account is available to anyone doing business in the country including anyone purchasing property. Although the typical Know Your Customer (KYC) requirements must be observed, a non-Bahamian obtaining a bank account in The Bahamas is a fairly simple process. Private banking services are also widely available. These services allow non-Bahamians to hold money in foreign currencies and to hold precious metals offshore.

The cost of living in The Bahamas is comparable to the US or slightly higher, but the Bahamian tax system will leave most non-Bahamians better off overall. There are no income taxes, no capital gains taxes, no sales taxes, estate taxes or other personal taxes. The local economy is based on tourism and financial services, but there are

numerous incentives for investors looking to establish a business presence in the country. For more information please contact the Sand Dollar Group, LLC at info@sanddollargroup.com or call 616-617-4417.

Civil Liberties: The Erosion of the 4th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution

The civil liberties of U.S. citizens, their Fourth Amendment rights in particular, are being eroded at a rapid pace. The pretext for the destruction of Americans' civil liberties is the "global war on terror," which – according to all three branches of government – requires that Americans surrender their liberties for security and protection from foreign and domestic threats. The nine-year erosion of civil liberties has been spearheaded by federal agencies, but individual states of the U.S.A. are now following in the federal government's wake as local law enforcement agencies are increasingly becoming a tool of state authority and state security rather than performing functions as civil service agencies designed to protect and serve citizens. The trend will soon lead to a new framework for law enforcement activities. Without a reversal of this trend, law enforcement will soon exist primarily to protect the interests of government.

The Fourth Amendment, enacted in 1791, is designed to protect both individual and property rights by recognizing and affirming that that citizens are endowed with the right to be free from tyrannical government intervention in their personal lives. It respects the individual and requires law enforcement to be subservient to individual rights by barring law enforcement from conducting unreasonable searches and seizures. Further, it clearly states that search warrants that enable the government to enter a person's property and seize property pursuant to a criminal investigation must be based on probable cause not the mere discretion or desire of law enforcement agencies to assume an entitlement to conduct a search for the mere fact that they hold police power. This amendment is rooted in 17th century English law designed to prevent the King from exercising unchecked authority over landowners, and it is what has separated the United States from totalitarian nations in the 19th and 20th centuries. Under U.S. law, the doctrine of probable cause was eventually expanded to include all citizens from the intrusive police powers of the state.

At the federal level the USA PATRIOT Act, passed soon after the events of September 11, 2001, is the keystone of America's new security state apparatus. The law originally required third party holders of private personal information to turn that information over to federal authorities upon request. This meant that doctors, libraries, bookstores, universities, and internet service providers would have to provide the government with

information on the actions, purchases, health, or activity of private citizens without anything more than a demand from federal authorities. Moreover, secret searches of personal residences and other property could be conducted without notice to the owner that such a search has ever occurred. This expansion of federal power was a clear and unambiguous violation of the Fourth Amendment and fortunately portions of the PATRIOT Act, including its "sneak and peek" provision, were struck down as unconstitutional violations of the Fourth Amendment. This did not, however, prevent the federal government from continuing to press for the ability to obtain private information or conduct secret searches by other means under the guise of national security. Efforts to mine data and track citizens' activities are ongoing as are efforts to undermine court authority to review the application of these police powers.

One of law enforcement's newest tools is the GPS tracking device, and recent court decisions have said that police can enter your property and place a tracking device on your vehicle without showing probable cause or obtaining a warrant. One of the most visible cases is United States of America v. Juan Pineda-Moreno. In this case, DEA agents snuck onto Pineda-Moreno's property at night and attached a tracking device to his car which was parked in his driveway. The agents, who suspected Pineda-Moreno of drug trafficking, did not demonstrate probable cause nor obtain a warrant from a court to attach the device. They merely decided they had the right and

the power to do so without judicial oversight. They tracked Pineda-Moreno's movements for a four month period until the tracking devices eventually led them to a suspected marijuana grow site. Pineda-Moreno was then arrested.

Traditionally, one of the keys to whether or not law enforcement is violating a citizen's rights under the Fourth Amendment relates to whether or not the person's property to be searched is on public or private property. Historically, one's driveway is considered private property, part of a person's "Curtilage," and therefore subject to the protections of the Fourth Amendment. Curtilage is defined as "the area to which extends the intimate activity associated with the 'sanctity of a man's home and privacies of life,' and therefore has been considered part of the home itself for Fourth Amendment purposes." Clearly, a person's driveway is a part of their curtilage, and the government in the case even conceded the point that Pineda-Moreno's driveway is in fact curtilage. The court disregarded the concession as well as the concept of private property and ownership and decided that it was not curtilage. The court stated that one's driveway is "semi-private" unless enclosed or blocked with a barrier or other feature. The fact that Pineda-Moreno had a "No Trespassing" sign posted on his property was inconsequential. The court went even farther in saying that one has no reasonable expectation of privacy to the undercarriage or exterior of their car – which is where the GPS device was placed.

Pineda-Moreno's petition to have the full Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals hear his case was denied, leaving a new definition of curtilage and privacy rights in place. In a blistering dissenting opinion, Chief Judge Kozinski, a former citizen of communist Romania, blasted the court for destroying a fundamental American civil right, stating that "[t]he very rich will still be able to protect their privacy with the aid of electric gates, tall fences, security booths, remote cameras, motion sensors and roving patrols, but the vast majority of the 60 million people living in the Ninth Circuit will see their privacy materially diminished by the panel's ruling. . . . Yet poor people are entitled to privacy, even if they can't afford all the gadgets of the wealthy for ensuring it." Kozinski closed his dissenting opinion by warning that there "is something creepy and un-American about such clandestine and underhanded behavior. To those of us who have lived under a totalitarian regime, there is an eerie feeling of *déjà vu*. We are taking a giant leap into the unknown, and the consequences for ourselves and our children may be dire and irreversible. Some day, soon, we may wake up and find we're living in Oceania."

Since the ruling, other agencies have used the ruling to justify aggressive police activities. The FBI, in Santa Clara, California conducted a warrantless tracking of a young community college student and computer salesman's car by placing a tracking device on it – as in the Pineda-Moreno case. Yasir Afifi, who was emotionally devastated by the operation that

targeted him, noticed the tracking device hanging from his car when a mechanic at an oil changing station brought it to his attention. [8] The day after the mechanic removed the strange device from the car, FBI agents showed up at Afifi's apartment door demanding the return of the device.

These are just two examples of many surrounding the proliferation of GPS tracking devices and the erosion of the Fourth Amendment protections historically granted to U.S. citizens. Police powers are supplanting Constitutional rights all across the United States and a number of lawsuits challenging the violation of rights are being heard in courts across the country. While some states have followed the U.S. Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, courts in other jurisdictions like Massachusetts and Washington D.C. have not. The variance of rulings from state to federal jurisdictions has set the stage for an eventual U.S. Supreme Court decision on the matter. The Supreme Court decision, if it falls on the side of law enforcement, will effectively rewrite the Constitution and forever change the interface between police power, individual liberty, and private property.

The issues of unlawful search and seizure and invasion of privacy have become extremely urgent matters, particularly with respect to recent scandals involving Transportation Security Administration (TSA) agents' application of radiation body scanners and aggressive frisking techniques at the many of the nation's airports. A groundswell of grass roots opposition is

lashing back against the technology and TSA techniques, and many lawsuits have been filed challenging the implementation of procedures that target every American citizen as a prospective threat.

The direct and heavy application of government police power in a manner that challenges Constitutional limits on power is a trend that will continue until the courts resolve the limits of power this new age. The coming court decisions promise to alter the American legal landscape for decades to come.

The original article by Paul C. Wright can be found online at [Global Research](#)

International Travel: U.S. Re-Entry Requirements

Every U.S. citizen should have a passport to enable transnational mobility, not just for tourism or business purposes, but also to ensure mobility in order to avoid potential civil unrest at home. Additionally, having a passport is now necessary to enter and return from countries where a passport was not necessary in the past – such as Canada and Mexico. Travelers should keep abreast of changes in the law, such as those that follow, which were passed in the wake of 9/11.

When returning to the U.S. from any international location regardless of whether

for tourism, business, or any other purposes, one should be prepared to comply with the U.S. State Department's Western Hemisphere Travel initiative (WHTI). WHTI tells you documentation you need to have in order to lawfully reenter the U.S. here is what you need to know:

- Returning from any international location by air – you must have a passport.
- Returning from Canada, Mexico, Bermuda, or the Caribbean region by land or sea – you must have a U.S. passport book or card.
- Returning from a U.S. Territory by air, land, or sea – you must have a valid photo ID.

The above requirements apply to U.S. citizens only as other rules apply to non-citizen legal residents (green card holders). Legal residents typically need to have their green card and passport from their country of origin. If you do not yet have a passport, ensure you obtain one and do not wait for it to expire before you renew it.



Contact us to learn about obtaining a second residence outside of the United States.



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