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DF #1 – Security vs. Privacy

In 2015, there was a mass shooting done by Syed Rizwan Farook in San Bernardino, California killing 15 people (1). The FBI managed to get the iPhone of the perpetrator and, “As a part of the investigation, the FBI attempted to gain access to the data stored on the phone but was unable to penetrate its encryption software” (3). FBI turned to Apple and has a federal judge ask to help the FBI bypass the security measures which included the 4-digit login code and the feature that erases all data after ten incorrect attempts for this one phone (2). They did this to possibly further “understand the attack and prevent further incidents” (2). Ultimately, Apple turned down the request and did so because the order would go against their First Amendment, threaten the privacy of all iPhone owners, and would set a dangerous precedent. They said it would violate their First Amendment because the request would include them writing code actively forcing the company to “say” something that they didn’t want to say (3). The order would have had Apple create a backdoor to the iPhone which would inherently make not only Farook’s phone insecure and accessible but also every iPhone in the world that way as well (4). Apple mentioned that having such a back door to a popular device would be dangerous all iPhone users’ privacy and highly lucrative to hackers. In addition, this order would set a dangerous precedent because “law enforcement could repeatedly require businesses such as Apple to assist in criminal investigations, effectively making technology companies an agent of government” (3). The technology industry was in support of Apple, while the FBI had the support of the White House. The White House press secretary Josh Earnest told reporters that the FBI was “’simply asking for something that would have an impact on this one device’” (4). The Apple CEO, Tim Cook, had concerns that the FBI was using the court system to expand its authority (2). In the end, Apple basically said no to the request and the day before the hearing the FBI withdrew because they no longer needed Apple to help access the phone. “It is speculated that an Israeli tech firm helped the FBI gain access (2).

I think that the FBI asking had good intentions in asking, but they didn’t know and maybe even didn’t understand the repercussions of their request. I felt they were wrong in asking Apple specifically because Apple is just a business and isn’t a government entity. I feel they should have people in the FBI know about these things but at the time, I am sure this was a new finding of a way to information of people for the government.

I believe Apple had the right to refuse as a business and as a company that protects their customer’s information. I felt that Apple would earn distrust from people after creating that back door and along with that if Apple were to work with the government on this case, it would bring up privacy issues as well. I agree to the fact that having that back door would weaken all of the phones. This is because once a back door is created, it allows for others to figure out that back door and take advantage. I would also feel that consumers would have a certain feel violation of privacy. Apple’s job tries to eliminate all possible back doors and to have their company as the best possible strength in security. I also believe that since Apple isn’t an agent of government, they shouldn’t really be in the picture.

I think that it was slightly wrong to ask another company to “unlock” the phone. I feel the FBI should hire more people working under the lay who understand phones and can do it instead of outside companies. The move they made ultimately just disregarded the points Apple was making about security and I felt was the most gracious. I definitely see their motive in just getting reasons for the killer’s actions. So, I am slightly okay with the fact that they went to another company because they got their answers and Apple gets to uphold their motives to protect their users.

I feel that both are very important. I feel, since I have to choose, I would prefer security. I think it is important to have strength in security to protect information. With security, I believe comes with privacy. Ultimately, I feel the both come hand-in-hand and work together to attain both. I just feel that with strong security would benefit your privacy.

Works Cited

1. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/30/technology/apples-new-challenge-learning-how-the-us-cracked-its-iphone.html>
2. <https://www.scu.edu/ethics/focus-areas/business-ethics/resources/apple-vs-fbi-case-study/>
3. <https://ethicsunwrapped.utexas.edu/case-study/fbi-apple-security-vs-privacy>
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