Discussion Chapter 8

This discussion has been in the news lately and is an ongoing debate. Should the government have access to back door product development?  Will having a back door increase the consumer's chance of being hacked? Include references in your discussion to backup your perspective.

December 15th, 2015, a terrorist attack broke out in San Bernardino, California, killing fourteen and injuring twenty-two others. The attackers were later killed in a shoot-out with the police. Among the recovered evidences was the iPhone of a perpetrator. Determined to extract information from the phone, Apple, the creator of iPhone, was summoned to court. The FBI wanted Apple to provide a means to “break” into the phone and extract information. The phone’s information was protected with a four-digit pin, and the phone would completely erase itself after ten incorrect pin attempts. To get around this, a “back door” to the software/firmware could be exploited or created. Ultimately, Apple refused to comply, though, the FBI was still able to accomplish its goal via third party.

This is just one example of many where the debate over government-accessible back doors has been brought into question. The primary pro-argument is that it could allow greater crime prevention and overall protection to society. Very similar to the PATRIOT act, it would give government intelligence the edge on terrorism and other harmful or illegal actions. The primary con-argument is that allowing government special access to an individual’s phone or other devices would be in violation to the Freedom of Speech and would be a major infringement upon privacy. Secondary to this argument is that back doors add a huge security vulnerability. Ideally, the back door would only be accessed by proper government authorities and only used for the intended legal purposes. Unfortunately, the government and people who are elected to operate in it are not perfect. Where power is given there exists the ability to do much good and much evil. It’d only be a matter of time before the power was misused, or crucial back door information slipped to unauthorized individuals. It’s only a matter of time before brilliant hackers are able to exploit back doors with or without leaked information. Summed up perfectly by Apple CEO Tim Cook, “You can’t have a backdoor that’s only for the good guys.”

Both sides of the argument have good points, but I personally feel that government should not be provided with special back door entrances. While it’s possible that a special back door may advert terrible events such as terrorist attacks, I feel that this is a minority event. I think that there is a greater potential for harm than good in the majority of situations.

Resources:

1. <https://newatlas.com/whatsapp-backdoor-government-encryption/48629/>
2. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/FBI%E2%80%93Apple_encryption_dispute>
3. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patriot_Act>
4. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freedom_of_speech>