



# Governments Using Coronavirus To Break Down Privacy

After 9/11 and the Patriot Act, privacy at airports became a thing of the past as the TSA insured that all travelers were searched, prodded, x-rayed and intimidated. The war on viruses will exacerbate that trend by an order of magnitude. □ TN Editor

Thousands of people in the United States have tested positive for COVID-19, and the death toll around the world has [surpassed 6,000](#). Italy is under lockdown and in New York City the government is demanding businesses including bars, restaurants and movie theaters be closed in an effort to stem the spread of the virus.

After draconian measures were implemented in China to halt the rapid infection rate of the virus, including movement restrictions, large scale surveillance and forced isolation, it seems such measures are working, with [new cases in China declining](#). Those same measures are unlikely to be adopted in the U.S., but the government and employers across the

nation will have to navigate complex questions regarding privacy and public health in the coming months.

“It is telling that at this point, public health experts are not calling for any of these measures; they have been clear that the tactics that will be most useful are social distancing and good hygiene like careful hand-washing and disinfecting,” says Rachel Levinson-Waldman, Senior Counsel of the Liberty and National Security Program at the Brennan Center for Justice, at NYU School of Law.

China has implemented surveillance tools at odds with core American values like freedom to speak, to travel and to assemble. Coronavirus - while undeniably a public health emergency - should not become an excuse to institute tools that would undermine those values.”

The implications of China’s actions are far-reaching when it comes to further compromising their citizen’s privacy, and could well be left in place even after the coronavirus is under control, as [CoinDesk wrote about last week](#).

Kathryn Waldron, a cybersecurity fellow at the R Street Institute, a think tank that promotes free markets and limited government, is skeptical we’ll see the rollout of surveillance technology in the U.S. on the same scale as China. First, the U.S. doesn’t have the scale of facial recognition infrastructure already in place to conduct mass surveillance that China does. Second, Americans are less likely to allow wide-scale government surveillance on the scale of China.

This is not a time for employers to opportunistically collect additional information about their employees or to introduce employee surveillance measures.

“Government surveillance isn’t a new phenomenon to Chinese citizens,” says Waldron. “China’s Social Credit Score system already used facial recognition technology and nearly omnipresent surveillance to manage people’s daily lives and individuals with insufficient scores have already been denied the ability to travel on occasion, long before COVID-19 was a threat. Rolling out additional surveillance measures now isn’t radically new behavior.”

## The cost of public health

There is a tension between the needs of the public in staying safe and the erosion of privacy that might necessitate, and it's unclear what path the government might chart forward in this regard.

Levinson-Waldman says the calls right now are for people to self-isolate, and she hasn't heard suggestions that technologies like those being used in China are going to be introduced here.

But she raises the lockdown of Boston in the search for the perpetrators of the Boston marathon bombing as something that might offer insights into the current situation. She says that may have been an understandable decision in the immediate aftermath of a major emergency, but it was also arguably a significant violation of civil liberties. There were [other steps, such as not closing all public transit in the city or locking the city down, that could have been taken](#).

"It's not hard to imagine that there could be some kind of governmental overreaction to this crisis, whether we're talking about privacy or other civil liberties," Levinson-Waldman says.

[Read full story here...](#)

---



## Musk's SpaceX Launches 60 More Starlink Satellites

Undeterred from the global health crisis and resulting economic and financial meltdown, Technocrat Elon Musk went ahead with the launch of another 60 Starlink satellites to blanket earth with 5G service. □ TN Editor

Three days after a dramatic launch abort, a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket suffered a premature engine shutdown during the climb to space Wednesday but was still able to place another batch of 60 [Starlink internet satellites](#) into the planned orbit. The first stage, however, was unable to pull off what would have been its fifth landing, instead chalking up SpaceX's second unsuccessful recovery in the past three flights.

The launching from historic pad 39A at the Kennedy Space Center came just hours after NASA put its field centers on coronavirus "level 3" status, requiring civil servants to work from home and closing the bases to all but "mission-essential" personnel to slow the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

But the restrictions did not affect SpaceX workers or Air Force personnel

who provide tracking and telemetry support, and the Falcon 9 thundered to life at 8:16 a.m. EDT, streaking away from pad 39A at the Kennedy Space Center along a northeasterly trajectory over the Atlantic Ocean.

A launch try Sunday was aborted as the booster's nine Merlin 1D engines were firing up when "out of family" data was detected during a last-second computer check. No details were provided, but the company was able to recycle for a second launch try Wednesday and this time around, the countdown ticked smoothly to blastoff.

The first stage, after boosting the second stage and its cargo of 60 Starlink satellites out of the thick lower atmosphere, attempted to fly itself back to fifth landing an off-shore droneship, firing three engines to slow down as it plunged back toward Earth.

[Read full story here...](#)





# China Slashes Subsidies For Alternative Energy

China's Technocracy is taking major blows at every turn, and it appears that it will stop chasing windmills and solar farms. With crashing energy demand and falling prices on coal and oil, alternative energy has absolutely no economic justification. □ TN Editor

Things might be going from bad to worse for Elon Musk and his merry band of alternative energy cultists in China. While Musk is currently in the midst of criticism from the Chinese government related to a [bait and switch he is pulling](#) on vehicle hardware (while blaming the coronavirus), the Chinese government appears to be set on slashing additional alternative energy subsidies in 2020.

**China is going to cut its budget for new solar power plants in half this year and plans on completely ending handouts for offshore wind farms**, according to [Caixin](#).

It is the latest in a string of moves by the Chinese government to cut support for renewable energy. The attitude has shifted in recent years as manufacturing costs have dropped. The government now seems focused on getting renewable energy to stand on its own.

**On Tuesday, China's National Energy Administration (NEA) announced it had cut this year's subsidies for new solar power projects by 50% to 1.5 billion yuan (\$215.8 million).** "Of the total, it has earmarked 1 billion yuan for large solar projects, which will be divvied out through auctions. The remainder will be used for residential solar systems," Caixin reports.

China is also doing away with subsidies for new offshore wind farms this year and is ending subsidies for new onshore projects in 2020.

Shi Jingli, a professor at a research institute under China's top economic planner said: "Cutting subsidies for new renewable energy projects is a reasonable measure to allocate funds more wisely. **The generous subsidies given to offshore wind farms over the past few years**

**have weighed on the central government's finances and caused severe deficits in subsidy funding."**

Jingli continued: "Considering the damage that the coronavirus outbreak has done to businesses, the NEA has extended the application period for the auctions until mid-June. It has also given solar and wind farm operators an additional month to apply to connect their projects to the country's power grid, which is necessary for a power plant to start selling electricity."

Meanwhile, new installations of solar power capacity plunged 40% last year after the country installed 26.81 gigawatts of new capacity. **Numerous other projects underway have already hit major delays due to the coronavirus outbreak and supply chain disruptions.**

**Could EVs be next?**

[Read full story here...](#)