Total Information Awareness

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**Total Information Awareness (TIA)** was a program of the US [Information Awareness Office](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Information_Awareness_Office). It was operated from February until May 2003, before being renamed as the [Terrorism Information Awareness Program](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Terrorism_Information_Awareness_Program&action=edit&redlink=1).

Based on the concept of [predictive policing](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Predictive_policing), TIA aimed to gather detailed information about individuals in order to anticipate and prevent crimes before they are committed. As part of efforts to win the [War on Terror](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/War_on_Terror), the program searched for all sorts of personal information in the hunt for terrorists around the globe. According to Senator [Ron Wyden](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ron_Wyden) (D-Ore.), TIA was the "biggest surveillance program in the [history of the United States](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_United_States)".

The program was suspended in late 2003 by the [United States Congress](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Congress) after media reports criticized the government for attempting to establish "Total Information Awareness" over all citizens.Although the program was formally suspended, its [data mining](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Data_mining) software was later adopted by other government agencies, with only superficial changes being made. According to a 2012 [*New York Times*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_York_Times) article, the legacy of Total Information Awareness is "quietly thriving" at the [National Security Agency](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Security_Agency).

***Q*.** How do you feel about government agencies collecting information about citizens in order to keep them safe from terrorism?

***Q***. How do you feel about companies collecting information about potential customers in order to sell to them or display relevant advertising?

**An ecommerce company uses the following information (metadata) to assess whether to offer credit to its customers.**

* Make of computer
* Email address
* Time of order
* Postal address
* Age

***Q*.** How might this information influence a company’s decision to offer credit to customers?

***Q*.** What other information could be used to influence the decision to offer credit?

***Q.*** Imagine you have a Total Information Awareness machine and can find out anything you want to know about potential customers. For example:

* eating habits
* media consumption
* clothes worn

What other types of information would you like to have access to?

**Focus in on one of these areas and write some questions for the TIA machine operator.**

For example:

* *Where do our potential customers buy clothes?*
* *How often do they buy clothes?*
* *What brands do they favour?*
* *Do they prefer to buy online or on the High Street?*

***Q.*** How would you use the information gained to target consumers?

For example:

* *If consumers shop at H&M then we can target them with advertisements for trendy but good value clothing.*
* *If they don’t like clothes shopping they might be more interested in buying online.*
* *Consumers who buy expensive brands probably aren’t interested in cheap clothing stores.*