

Total Information Awareness

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Total Information Awareness (TIA) was a program of the US Information Awareness Office. It was operated from February until May 2003, before being renamed as the Terrorism Information Awareness Program.

Based on the concept of 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, the program searched for all sorts of personal information in the hunt for terrorists around the globe. According to Senator Ron Wyden (D-Ore.), TIA was the "biggest surveillance program in the history of the United States".

The program was suspended in late 2003 by the 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 software was later adopted by other government agencies, with only superficial changes being made. According to a 2012 *New York Times* article, the legacy of Total Information Awareness is "quietly thriving" at the 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.*