



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on April 2, 2013

## President Obama Wants to Get Inside Your BRAIN

President Obama [announced Tuesday](#) his plan to spend \$100 million to “revolutionize our understanding of the human mind.”

Dubbed the BRAIN Initiative — short for Brain Research through Advancing Innovative Neurotechnologies — the program calls on the National Institutes of Health, Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) and the National Science Foundation to kickstart the research.



Describing the brain mapping project as one of his administration’s “Grand Challenges,” the president [explained the goal](#) behind the grants:

Imagine if no family had to feel helpless watching a loved one disappear behind the mask of Parkinson’s or struggle in the grip of epilepsy. Imagine if we could reverse traumatic brain injury or PTSD for our veterans who are coming home. Imagine if someone with a prosthetic limb can now play the piano or throw a baseball as well as anybody else, because the wiring from the brain to that prosthetic is direct and triggered by what’s already happening in the patient’s mind. What if computers could respond to our thoughts or our language barriers could come tumbling down. Or if millions of Americans were suddenly finding new jobs in these fields — jobs we haven’t even dreamt up yet — because we chose to invest in this project.

Freeing the human race from disease is a noble endeavor, but perhaps President Obama should explain how the military’s super-secret research and development group (DARPA) is going to help.

DARPA answers that question on its own website. In [a statement announcing its participation in BRAIN](#), DARPA declares: “Better understanding of human brain supports national security.”

To help keep the country safe, DARPA will focus on the following aspects of the function of the human brain:

DARPA plans to explore two key areas to elicit further understanding of the brain. New tools are needed to measure and analyze electrical signals and the biomolecular dynamics underpinning brain function. Researchers will also explore, abstract and model the vast spectrum of brain functions by examining its incredible complexity.

And:

DARPA’s planned investment includes new programs to address the areas outlined and ongoing efforts designed to advance fundamental understanding of the brain’s dynamics to drive applications (Revolutionizing Prosthetics, Restorative Encoding Memory Integration Neural Device, Reorganization and Plasticity to Accelerate Injury Recovery, Enabling Stress Resistance), manufacture sensing systems for neuroscience applications (Reliable Neural Interface Technology, Blast Gauge), and analyze large data sets (Detection and Computational Analysis of Psychological Signals).



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Readers will rightly be concerned about the president's plan to order DARPA to fiddle with the mind in the name of "national security."

Last month, *Esquire* magazine's Luke Dittrich [highlighted the president's plan](#) to map the mind. In his research, Dittrich uncovered a paper by a few of the scientists involved in the BRAIN Initiative that reveals a more sinister aspect of the government's quest to understand the mind.

The paper — entitled "[The Brain Activity Map Project and the Challenge of Functional Connectomics](#)" — includes predictions of the development of "techniques for wireless, noninvasive readout of the activity of neuronal populations." In simpler terms, this research would allow those in control of the discoveries gleaned from this program to wirelessly access and control the brains of target populations.

Consider this excerpt from the academic study, as well:

This emergent level of understanding could also enable accurate diagnosis and restoration of normal patterns of activity to injured or diseased brains, foster the development of broader biomedical and environmental applications, and even potentially generate a host of associated economic benefits.

"Restoration of normal patterns" takes on an eery aspect when viewed in concert with the DARPA connection.

Rittich recognized this potential for less-than-noble application in his article. He writes:

I'm not saying that the President's brain-mapping project is a bad idea. As he put it in his State of the Union address, it could help "unlock the answers to Alzheimer's," among other worthy goals. But I do think it's worth considering that this same project is also a DARPA-associated endeavor that could lead to the development of the first truly sci-fi caliber mind-control technology.

Development of such mind-control technologies is certainly consistent with DARPA's recent efforts to speed of the growth of the surveillance state and the increasing sophistication of the tools used to build it.

At [The New American](#) we [have chronicled](#) the [various](#) projects [sponsored by](#) the über-secret research and development arm of the military. One of the newest technologies being pursued by DARPA will not only widen the field of vision of government's never-blinking eye, but it purports to predict the behavior of those being watched.

[Forbes reports](#) that DARPA has contracted with scientists at Carnegie Mellon University to develop "[an artificial intelligence system](#) that can watch and predict what a person will 'likely' do in the future using specially programmed software designed to analyze various real-time video surveillance feeds. The system can automatically identify and notify officials if it recognized that an action is not permitted, detecting what is described as anomalous behaviors."

Deployment of the devices is anticipated at "airports and bus stations," but there is little doubt that should these predictive monitors prove successful, they will be installed right there next to the red light cameras already mounted at nearly every intersection in America.

With millions of tax dollars deposited by BRAIN into its research coffers, DARPA can begin planning to identify brain activity typical of those who could potential pose a threat to national security. These threats could be eliminated by being brought into a federal government lab run by the National Institutes of Health and have their "diseased" brain healed and brought back into "normal" function.



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In its announcement, DARPA names “Detection and Computational Analysis of Psychological Signals (DCAPS)” as one of its primary areas of emphasis in its BRAIN activity. A separate entry on another part of the [DARPA website reveals more about DCAPS](#) and how it could be used:

DCAPS tools will be developed to analyze patterns in everyday behaviors to detect subtle changes associated with post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and suicidal ideation. In particular, DCAPS hopes to advance the state-of-the-art in extraction and analysis of “honest signals” from a wide variety of sensory data inherent in daily social interactions. DCAPS is not aimed at providing an exact diagnosis, but at providing a general metric of psychological health.

DCAPS also aims to develop novel algorithms for detecting distress cues from users who opt in to provide data such as text and voice communications, daily patterns of sleeping, eating, social interactions and online behaviors, and nonverbal cues such as facial expression, posture and body movement. The outcomes of these analytical algorithms would be correlated with distress markers from neurological sensors for improved understanding of distress cues.

There is legitimate reason to oppose the BRAIN Initiative. The president’s nomination of DARPA as one of the three primary participants in the project reveals a darker, less altruistic purpose behind the government’s goal of getting inside the brains of Americans.

As has been demonstrated, [Washington considers patriots “home-grown terrorists”](#) and there is little doubt that any technologies developed by grants from the BRAIN Initiative could eventually be used to identify those with tendencies toward suspect thoughts and to use the map of the brain to re-program patriots and eliminate the threat they are accused of posing to national security.

Despite the president’s portrayal of the project as having a purely humanitarian purpose, there is irrefutable evidence that it is yet another expansion of the surveillance state and assault on the Fourth Amendment.

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