



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

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Thank you for your email about the emergency Data Retention and Investigatory Powers Bill and I entirely understand your concerns on the issue. We must strike the right balance between keeping the nation safe from terrorists and other serious criminals on the one hand, and protecting the personal freedoms of private citizens on the other.

This Bill allows MI6 and GCHQ to monitor the pattern of communications between serious criminals and terrorists, but they will only be able to access content with a warrant signed by the Secretary of State. I think that private citizens can therefore rest assured that their email and text communications, and their internet browsing histories are not the targets here. The purpose of this Bill is to monitor the pattern of communications between people who seek to harm other members of the public.

In addition, the Bill will strengthen the oversight of intelligence powers. Between now and 2016, the Government will review the Regulation of Investigatory Power Act to make recommendations to reform and update it. The Government is also establishing a Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board to ensure civil liberties are properly considered when the Government sets counter-terrorism policy. I welcome this.

No-one introduces fast-track legislation lightly, but I personally think that the consequences of not acting are grave. Communications data interception helps keep people safe and is used in 95 per cent of all serious and organised crime prosecutions, and in every single major counter-terrorism investigation over the last decade. I believe that the Bill will ensure that we maintain powers to help keep us safe from those who would harm UK citizens.