



ASIAN AMERICANS
**ADVANCING
JUSTICE**
ASIAN LAW CAUCUS

VIA EMAIL

March 4, 2014

Hon. Desley Brooks
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Hon. Noel Gallo
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Hon. Dan Kalb
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Hon. Rebecca Kaplan
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Hon. Larry Reid
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Hon. Libby Schaaf
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RE: March 4, 2014 Oakland City Council Vote Regarding Domain Awareness Center (DAC) Phase 2 – Vote NO

Dear Honorable City Council Members:

My name is Mohamed Shehk and I'm a community advocate with the San Francisco, Bay Area based Advancing Justice – Asian Law Caucus's National Security and Civil Rights program. Our work focuses on combating racial and religious discrimination, profiling, Islamophobia, and other abuses against African, Arab, Middle Eastern, Muslim, and South Asian (AAMEMSA) communities in our post-9/11 era.

AAMEMSA communities have regularly been the target of unwarranted surveillance in the Bay Area and across the country. They have faced egregious abuses of their civil rights and privacy

purely because of their race or religious beliefs. Law enforcement agents have infiltrated their places of worship, community centers, and gatherings in order to spy on them solely for participating in activities that are protected by the First Amendment, leading to a general atmosphere of fear and distrust.

Widespread implementation of the Domain Awareness Center will, without a doubt, lead to an expansion and intensification of ongoing surveillance of protected activities, civil rights violations, and invasion of privacy. Even at this early stage, publicized documents have demonstrated that the DAC is being used not for so called “public safety,” but rather to surveil legal political activity.

Already, we have numerous examples of Islamophobia and racial profiling in what is called the Suspicious Activity Reporting (SARs) program. Like the proposed DAC, Suspicious Activity Reports are submitted by local police and citizens, which are then aggregated into a central database called “eGaurdian” where local law enforcement, FBI, or DHS agents work in tandem to follow up on the reports. Just to give examples of the types of “suspicious activities” that are reported: “suspicious ME [Middle Eastern] males buy[ing] several large pallets of water.” Or: “Sgt. [redacted] has long been concerned about a residence in his neighborhood occupied by a Middle Eastern male adult physician who is very unfriendly.” These are just two of 1700 reports in California that have been made public. Being unfriendly and buying a lot of water are completely normal activities, but when the perpetrators of these activities are Muslims or people of color, they become suspicious and worthy of investigation.

We know too well from our work, and especially in light of Edward Snowden’s revelations, that allowing law enforcement greater tools and authority to surveil and investigate citizens in the name of “fighting terrorism” or “fighting crime” will undeniably result in unprecedented invasions of privacy and the targeting of protected protest, of AMEMSA communities, and people of color. We urge Oakland City Council Members to vote no on this resolution, and to allow our citizens and communities to live in peace.

Sincerely,

Mohamed Shehk
Community Advocate

