Big Brother aims to screen all online activity in UK

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(AFP Photo / Thomas Coex)

British security agencies are pushing for a law, which would allow vast amount of private data to be collected and stored, according to media reports. Big Brother will know who you call, what sites you surf and how you play video games.

The government wants details about text messages, phone calls, email, visited websites, Facebook and Twitter exchanges and even online games chats, British media report.

According to the initiative called the Communications Capabilities Development Programme, the data will be stored for a year and will be available to the secret services.

The security scheme requires Internet providers, landline and mobile phone operators to police their clients in an effort to combat terrorism.

What is said in text messages and phone calls will not be recorded, but much other data, including geographical whereabouts or people involved will be.

The plan is said to have been prepared by the Home Office in collaboration with home security service MI5, the foreign intelligence service MI6 and the Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ), the body responsible for signals intelligence and information assurance for UK's government and armed forces.

Rights activists fear potential abuse of the surveillance, as well as hacker threats to the database storing the personal details collected.

"Britain is already one of the most spied on countries off-line and this is a shameful attempt to watch everything we do online in the same way," Nick Pickles, director of the liberty organization Big Brother Watch told the Daily Mail newspaper.

The plan is expected to be announced in May in the Queen's Speech. It is a rewrite of a similar plan, which was developed by the Labour party, but had been shelved in November 2009 due to lack of public support. Then in opposition the Conservatives criticized Labour's "reckless" record on privacy.

"The Conservatives and Liberal Democrats started their government with a big pledge to roll back the surveillance state," Jim Killock, executive director of the Open Rights Group told the Daily Telegraph newspaper. *"No state in history has been able to gather the level of information proposed – it's a way of collecting everything about who we talk to just in case something turns up."*