Many security people have been asked for our thoughts about the horrific attacks of the 11th of September simply because we are presumed to have special knowledge of security-related issues. In this issue of the Security Newsletter, I’d like to draw readers’ attention to several sources of thoughtful commentary and pointers to further reading.

Professor Phil Agre of the Department of Information Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles (<http://dlis.gseis.ucla.edu/people/pagre/> is the publisher of the widely-respected Red Rock Eater News Service (RRE). I have enjoyed his thoughtful and original analyses of all manner of stimulating topics for several years as a subscriber to this one-way mailing list (<http://dlis.gseis.ucla.edu/people/pagre/rre.html>). In addition to publishing his own essays and distributing interesting work by other thinkers, Prof. Agre collects and organizes Web links contributed by his many readers. Since the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, he has posted hundreds of URLs about the situation; anyone looking for research materials will find a wealth of sources listed ranging from brilliant political analysis to rants from the lunatic fringe.

Another source of pointers to published articles and occasional letters and opinion pieces is the Politics of Technology list run by journalist Declan McCullagh (<http://www.politechbot.com/>). McCullagh is a gifted writer himself, and in addition to his own publications, his list provides a daily source of stimulating and often provocative discourse about the implications of technology for political life.

Peter Neumann (<http://www.csl.sri.com/users/neumann/neumann.html>) is Principal Scientist at the Computer Science Laboratory of SRI and is a giant in the field of security. His only defect, in the opinion of many, is an irrepressible capacity for truly horrible puns. His moderated Risks Forum (“Forum on Risks to the Public in Computers and Related Systems”) is accessible as a USENET newsgroup (comp.risks) and also in digest form by e-mail (<http://www.csl.sri.com/users/neumann/neumann.html#3>). RISKS regularly publishes short, thoughtful articles analyzing recent events and publications bearing on technology and society.

Dr Neumann is also a founder, with Lauren Weinstein, of People for Internet Responsibility (PFIR) (<http://www.pfir.org/>), which focuses on “the present and future operations, development, management, and regulation of the Internet in responsible ways.” I found the organization’s “Statement on Terrorism, Civil Liberties, and the Internet” (<http://www.pfir.org/statements/liberties>) to be a balanced and thoughtful analysis of some of the political responses to the current situation.

The Electronic Privacy Information Center (EPIC, <http://www.epic.org>) provides a valuable compendium of privacy-related resources; EPIC is a particularly good source of materials for anyone interested in the civil liberties dimensions of the current crisis. EPIC supports the statement entitled "In Defense of Freedom" (<http://www.indefenseoffreedom.org/>) that has been prepared by over 150 organizations.
Bruce Schneier, well-known cryptographer and thinker, publishes the Crypto-Gram newsletter <http://www.counterpane.com/crypto-gram.html> on the 15th of the month; he has, exceptionally, published a special issue dated September 30, 2001 that focuses on the September 11th events and their aftermath. Schneier offers his clear thinking on a number of crucial topics, including
* The Attacks
* Airline Security Regulations
* Biometrics in Airports
* Diagnosing Intelligence Failures
* Regulating Cryptography
* Terrorists and Steganography
* Protecting Privacy and Liberty
* How to Help.

All of us with a technology background should be particularly concerned with proposals to use information technology in the battle against terrorism. We owe it to our nations and to ourselves to bring our knowledge and experience to bear on what our legislators and other elected officials are offering as solutions to complex problems. I hope that the resources described above will help all of us clarify our own thinking about what we can do to improve national security and the security of the networks and computer systems for which we are responsible.

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