

Obama signs order outlining emergency Internet control

A new executive order addresses how the country deals with the Internet during natural disasters and security emergencies, but it also puts a lot of power in the government's hands.

by **Dara Kerr** July 10, 2012 9:43 PM PDT



President Barack Obama signed an executive order last week that could give the U.S. government control over the Internet.

With the wordy title "**Assignment of National Security and Emergency Preparedness Communications Functions**

, " this order was designed to empower certain governmental agencies with control over telecommunications and the Web during natural disasters and security emergencies.

Here's the rationale behind the order:

The Federal Government must have the ability to communicate at all times and under all circumstances to carry out its most critical and time sensitive missions. Survivable, resilient, enduring, and effective communications, both domestic and international, are essential to enable the executive branch to communicate within itself and with: the legislative and judicial branches; State, local, territorial, and tribal governments; private sector entities; and the public, allies, and other nations. Such communications must be possible under all circumstances to ensure national security, effectively manage emergencies, and improve national resilience.

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According to **The Verge**

, critics of the order are concerned with Section 5.2, which is a lengthy part outlining how telecommunications and the Internet are controlled. It states that the Secretary of Homeland Security will "oversee the development, testing, implementation, and sustainment" of national security and emergency preparedness measures on all systems, including private "non-military communications networks." According to The

Verge, critics say this gives Obama the on/off switch to the Web.

Presidential powers over the Internet and telecommunications were laid out in a **U.S. Senate bill in 2009**

, which proposed handing the White House the power to disconnect private-sector computers from the Internet. But that legislation was not included in the **Cybersecurity Act of 2012**

earlier this year.

After being published by the **Federal Register**

, executive orders take 30 days to become law.

However, the president can amend, withdraw, or issue an overriding order at any time.