Building A Backdoor To The Iphone: An Ethical Dilemma

Kennedy Byrd

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The FBI

Apple

Works Cited

The Situation

- The San Bernadino shootings created a difficult situation between Apple and the FBI
  - The shootings were carried out by a married couple who killed 14 and wounded 21 at the husband's work's holiday party
  - There was speculation as to whether these attacks were rooted in terrorism
  - They seemed to be working alone, but more could be known if the FBI had access to their iPhones.

Questions

Pros

Cons

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CEO Apple
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- This "backdoor" could speed up on
- Authorities could access the phon
  information

The FBI

- The FBI requested that Apple create a software that would assist in decrypting locked iPhones that are confiscated in cases such as this
  - This would act as a type of "backdoor" to the iOS that could be used to access to locked phones

Apple

- Apple's CEO, Tim Cook defended the company's refusal to create such a software with a letter to customers which read:
  - "The government would have us remove security features and add new capabilities to the operating system, allowing a passcode to be input electronically. This would make it easier to unlock an iPhone by "brute force," trying thousands or millions of combinations with the speed of a modern computer. The implications of the government's demands are chilling. If the government can use the All Writs Act to make it easier to unlock your iPhone, it would have the power to reach into anyone's device to capture their data. The government could extend this breach of privacy and demand that Apple build surveillance software to intercept your messages, access your health records or financial data, track your location, or even access your phone's microphone or camera without your knowledge. Opposing this order is not something we take lightly. We feel we must speak up in the face of what we see as an overreach by the U.S. government. We are challenging the FBI's demands with the deepest respect for American democracy and a love of our country. We believe it would be in the best interest of everyone to step back and consider the implications.

Pros

- Authorities can prevent future attacks by gaining information regarding accomplices and terrorist cells
- This "backdoor" could speed up ongoing investigations
- Authorities could access the phone of any criminal and gain important information

Cons

- Puts every user's security at risk
- It is a clear violation of privacy
- It leaves iOS users more vulnerable to hackers

Questions

- Did Apple respond rightly to the requests of the FBI?
- Do the pros outweigh the cons? Vice versa?
- There are clear dangers to the making of this software, but would it be better if it were created by Apple in a controlled environment rather than to risk someone developing it on their own?