



# American History (High School) Lesson 1



## The United States in the 21st Century

### Lesson 1

# National Security and Public Safety

## Key Terms and People

**drone** Unmanned aerial vehicle operated by a pilot on the ground

**National Security Agency (NSA)** Intelligence-gathering organization with the U.S. government

**racial profiling** The act of suspecting or targeting a person simply on the basis of his or her race or ethnic background

**human trafficking** The illegal movement of people for the purposes of forced labor or exploitation

## Before You Read

In the last lesson you learned about the changes facing Americans at the start of the 21st century. In this lesson you will read about ways that the U.S. government works to keep the public safe.

## As You Read

Complete a chart about safety and security issues.

### TERRORISM AND SECURITY

#### **What is the difference between foreign and domestic terrorism?**

The FBI describes terrorism as violent acts intended to intimidate a civilian population, to influence the policy of a government by intimidation, or to affect the conduct of a government by mass destruction, assassination, or kidnapping.

In the United States, the most deadly act of terrorism happened on September 11, 2001. More than 3,000 people died in New York City, Washington, DC, and rural Pennsylvania. The Department of Homeland Security was created to keep terrorists from striking the United States. Congress also passed the USA PATRIOT Act, expanding the government's powers to use search warrants, tap phones, and detain suspects. Some Americans felt

that the USA PATRIOT Act violated their constitutional rights to privacy and freedom. Congress agreed to let parts of the act expire, but there have been repeated extensions of the law for security reasons.

Since the September 11 attacks, there have been other terrorist threats and attacks. Air travel makes it easier for people from other countries to bring violence to the United States. Radicals can inspire violence through videos and recruit others on websites and social media. Radical Islamist writings and videos have inspired horrific terrorist acts. In April 2014 brothers Tamerlan and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, immigrants to the United States from Russia and Kyrgyzstan, detonated bombs killing 3 and injuring more than 260 people at the Boston Marathon.

**Lesson 1, *continued***

Domestic terrorism is a problem in the United States as well. Americans have committed crimes to intimidate others or influence government policy. Some terrorists wage attacks through beatings and murder to intimidate those they find objectionable. Such groups include the Aryan Nations, Stormfront, and the Ku Klux Klan. These groups claim white supremacy and may be anti-Semitic, anti-gay, anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim, and anti-gun control. Hate groups target an entire class of people, and there are believed to be over 700 of these groups. Extremists who do not belong to a group also are a threat. Whether they are organized in groups or acting alone, foreign and domestic terrorists threaten the security and safety of Americans.

1. How did the acts of September 11, 2001, change the United States?

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**SURVEILLANCE AND PRIVACY*****How is surveillance both an advantage and a disadvantage?***

Intelligence agencies and law enforcement rely on technology to keep track of the activities of terrorists. However, this technology is also used to keep track of regular citizens.

Technology makes surveillance of day-to-day activities possible. Closed-circuit television is used at airports, banks, and convenience stores. This may help deter or solve crimes.

Unmanned aerial vehicles called **drones** carry cameras, which make them useful for surveillance. They are used for movie-making, detecting forest fires, or inspecting power lines. Police departments may fly drones to check on crowded public events. The Department

of Homeland Security uses them to find immigrants crossing illegally from Mexico into Texas.

Another surveillance tool is the smartphone camera. Some uses of smartphone cameras are a crime, such as using stolen images for blackmail. However, photos from smartphones also have helped solve crimes.

The federal government is able to access information on its citizens through the **National Security Agency (NSA)**. This intelligence-gathering organization was founded during the Cold War. Its monitoring today has increased because of the threat of terrorism. However, some of its actions have come under media scrutiny. Top-secret internal NSA documents showed that the agency collected telephone information on millions of people throughout the world. Many of these people were not suspected of criminal activities. Edward Snowden, a contractor for the NSA, admitted to downloading classified documents and making them available to journalists. Some Americans called him a heroic whistleblower for revealing government wrongdoing; others said he was a traitor for endangering national security. He was charged with two counts of espionage and theft of government property.

In 2015 Congress passed a new bill that eliminated the NSA's bulk phone-records collection program. This was in response to a federal appeals court ruling.

While the NSA and other government agencies gather vital information that may save lives and property, some people question the high cost to individual rights.

2. What are some benefits of drones and smartphone cameras?

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Lesson 1, *continued***CRIME AND PUBLIC SAFETY****How has law enforcement changed?**

Many states have “three strikes” laws that say that any person found guilty of two previous crimes receives a stiff sentence of 20 to 30 years after conviction for a third. While this may serve to deter crime, it also adds to racial bias because many prison sentences involve African Americans.

The United States jails the largest percentage of people in the world. Some people say prison keeps people from committing additional crimes. Others say that it turns many nonviolent offenders into hardened criminals.

Putting people in prison for drug crimes such as marijuana use may be changing. Colorado, Alaska, Oregon, Washington State, and the District of Columbia have either legalized the use of marijuana by adults or loosened their marijuana laws.

In recent years, some police have been accused of inappropriate responses to public disturbances. Many of their actions have been recorded by smartphones or videos. In places such as Ferguson, Missouri, and New York City, young African American men have been shot and killed or treated in a harsh manner that has led to their deaths.

These incidents have brought into question ways police relate to minorities. Civil rights advocates have said that there is **racial profiling** by law enforcement. This is the act of suspecting or targeting a person simply on the basis of his or her race or ethnic background. A study of police records from the first five months of 2015 showed that U.S. police killed 399 people. Of that amount, 45 were unarmed and two-thirds of those were black or Hispanic. In response to these incidents, many police officers now are required to wear body cameras.

Another issue facing Americans is gun violence. More than 11,200 people were killed by gunfire in 2013. Almost 3,000 children and teens were killed by gunfire in 2014.

Supporters of gun ownership point to the Second Amendment and argue that gun-control laws violate its intent. Others say that the amendment was created to protect the state’s right to maintain military units. However, the U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that individuals do have the right to own firearms.

A crime that has grown in recent years is **human trafficking**. This occurs when people are brought into the U.S. against their will and in violation of the law. This trafficking involves mainly women and children. A major cause of human trafficking is poverty. Some parents sell their children in the hope that their children will have a better life in the United States. They may not know the children will be abused. Adults who need jobs are often offered work, but then find themselves trapped in physical labor or prostitution. Most human trafficking involves victims from South Asia, Southeast Asia, and Central America. However, some runaway teenagers from the United States also have been forced into sexual slavery. California, Texas, and Florida focus on enforcing laws against trafficking. Unfortunately, this is a crime that may continue for a long time. With global trade, there is a need for cheap labor. This encourages illegal immigration, which leads to trafficking.

3. Why is racial profiling unfair?

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Lesson 1, *continued*

Complete the chart by writing one or two short phrases to answer each question on security and safety issues.

<b>WHAT IS THE PURPOSE?</b>	
1. Why do terrorists use violence?	
2. Why do radicals use videos, websites, and social media?	
3. Why do hate groups use beatings and murders?	
4. Why do Intelligence agencies use closed-circuit television?	
5. Why do law enforcement agencies use drones?	
6. Why does the NSA engage in intelligence gathering?	
7. Why did Congress pass the USA PATRIOT Act?	
<b>WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?</b>	
8. What problems did some Americans see with the USA PATRIOT Act?	
9. Why do many Americans object to racial profiling?	
10. Why do Americans disagree on gun-control laws?	