

# US Army bars access to Guardian newspaper web site

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In response to Edward Snowden's exposure of massive National Security Agency (NSA) spying on the public, the Army Network Enterprise Technology Command (NETCOM) has censored access to the *Guardian* newspaper's web site throughout the US Army.

Reports of limited access by Army staff to the *Guardian* began to emerge shortly after Snowden's revelations were first published by the British newspaper. Employees in several departments of the US Army Garrison Presidio of Monterey in California reported to the *Monterey County Herald* that access was being blocked.

The *Herald* wrote: "Employees could go to the *Guardian's* US home page, [www.guardiannews.com](http://www.guardiannews.com), but were blocked from reading stories, such as NSA articles, that redirected to the British site, Presidio spokesman Dan Carpenter said."

On Thursday, the *Herald* obtained a statement from NETCOM spokesman Gordon Van Vleet that the actions were, in fact, Army-wide. He said NETCOM was filtering "some access to press coverage and online content about NSA leaks."

Van Vleet wrote: "The Department of Defense routinely takes preventive 'network hygiene' measures to mitigate unauthorized disclosures of classified information onto DoD unclassified networks."

The implications of the US Army censorship were made plain in a statement from the Presidio of Monterey information assurance security officer, Jose Campos, who sent an email to base employees that said the *Guardian's* web site was blocked by Army Cyber Command "in order to prevent unauthorized disclosure of classified information." He wrote further that an employee who downloaded classified information could face disciplinary action if found to have

knowingly downloaded material on an unclassified computer.

The Presidio of Monterey is primarily a training facility and houses the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center. There are approximately 3,000 civilian employees at the garrison as well as 1,450 Army students, 300 in the Marine Corps, 550 in the Navy and 1,300 in the Air Force. The Defense Language Institute teaches two-dozen foreign languages and the staff is made up of 2,000 instructors, 98 percent of whom are native speakers of the languages they teach.

It would appear that the staff at the Foreign Language Center was of particular concern because language specialists are an integral aspect of the signals intelligence work of the NSA and are deeply involved in cyber surveillance activities within the US and abroad.

The *Monterey County Herald* obtained and published the contents of a June 7 memorandum from the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense Timothy A. Davis to Defense Department security directors instructing them to warn employees and contractors that classified information posted on public web sites was still considered classified. Sent to the Presidio and other military installations, the memo read, "Leadership must establish a vigilant command climate that underscores the critical importance of safeguarding classified material against compromise."

An attachment to the memo instructs employees on how to delete classified information if it is accidentally downloaded and also warns of sanctions if they "proliferate the information in any way." NETCOM spokesman Van Vleet said the letter was meant as a "heads-up" and designed to remind Army staff, "Everyone's under the same agreement that Snowden

most likely signed.”

The military and intelligence establishment fears widespread knowledge within the ranks about the illegal activities of the NSA. It is worried that other employees or contractors may follow in Snowden’s footsteps and bring to the public’s attention more details of criminal enterprises of the US government.

The censorship and threats of sanctions for possession of information that is widely known by the public all over the world are aimed at bolstering the drive by the state to criminalize legitimate journalism . They are also aimed at preventing any discussion among government employees and military personnel about the implications and meaning of the exposures made by Snowden.

The Army’s censorship of a major international news source underscores the scale and ferocity of the assault on democratic rights being carried out by the Obama administration and the military/intelligence agencies. Their response to the exposure of the NSA’s seizure of the telephone records of all calls made in the US and its wire-tapping of electronic communications in the US and around the world is to step up their assault on democratic rights.

The censorship of the news coincides with an international manhunt and campaign of vilification directed against Snowden, who is being denounced by politicians, Democratic as well as Republican, and by the media as a spy and traitor. The US is seeking to seize the 30-year-old former NSA contractor, having indicted him under the Espionage Act.

The Obama administration has issued threats against China and Russia for their refusal to extradite Snowden to the US. It is believed the whistleblower is holed up in a transit lounge at the airport in Moscow, unable to travel further in part because the Obama administration has revoked his passport.

Meanwhile, Obama administration spokesmen have publicly denounced Snowden as a traitor, claiming that his efforts to inform the American people of massive and secret state surveillance—in violation of the US Constitution—constitute a violation of “national security.” Such statements by White House Press Secretary Jay Carney and others make a mockery of any claim that Snowden, were he to be captured and brought to the US, could receive a fair trial.

Obama’s assertions that the NSA programs are

lawful and do not violate privacy rights are thoroughly exposed by the Army’s attempts to stop its personnel and employees from reading newspapers. Were such practices exposed in China or Iran, Washington and the US media would be denouncing their governments for violating human rights.

Unable to overcome popular support for Snowden and opposition to government surveillance, the US government is resorting to repression and intimidation.

Politicians and the media have increasingly targeted the few news media and journalists who have made Snowden’s exposures available to the public. In recent days, there have been growing demands from Congressmen for the *Guardian*’s Glenn Greenwald to be prosecuted for interviewing Snowden and publishing stories based on his revelations. Last Sunday, David Gregory, the moderator of NBC News’ “Meet the Press” program, demanded that Greenwald explain why he should not be prosecuted.

The widening witch-hunt reflects the fear and hysteria within the state and the political establishment over the exposure of their attacks on democratic rights. At the same time, the official response demonstrates the degree to which authoritarian conceptions permeate the ruling elite and the very advanced state of its preparations for dictatorial forms of rule.

The *World Socialist Web Site* and the Socialist Equality Party are calling on all working people, youth and students to come to the defense of Edward Snowden, as well as Private Bradley Manning and Julian Assange. Their defense and the demand that all charges against them be dropped are an essential part of the development of a mass, independent political movement of the working class in defense of democratic rights.

Click here to get involved in this campaign.



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