

FISA court relies on information supplied by NSA, top judge admits

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The chief judge of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court (FISC), the secret court that nominally oversees National Security Agency spying on Americans, acknowledged yesterday that the court does not have the ability to verify the information supplied to it by the NSA.

Judge Reggie B. Walton issued a written statement to the *Washington Post* in response to articles published by the newspaper Friday exposing massive violations by the NSA of the laws and rules that are supposed to regulate its activities. The *Post* based its exposé on a top-secret internal audit conducted by the NSA, which was leaked to the newspaper earlier this summer by former NSA contractor-turned-whistleblower Edward Snowden.

“The [Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court] is forced to rely upon the accuracy of the information that is provided to the Court,” Walton wrote. “The FISC does not have the capacity to investigate issues of noncompliance...” The *Post* noted that the FISC has only five lawyers to review NSA compliance violation reports.

It had previously been widely reported that the FISC has approved over 99 percent of the NSA’s surveillance requests. Friday’s statement by the chief judge only underscores the fraudulent character of the court’s supposedly “robust” oversight of NSA spying.

The statement further exposes the stream of lies from the White House, the intelligence agencies and Congress intended to conceal the unconstitutional and antidemocratic character of the spying operations and dissipate public opposition to them. It also vindicates the assertions by Snowden that there are effectively no limits to NSA spying on Americans and people around the world.

President Obama has repeatedly touted the FISC as a

powerful safeguard against NSA “abuses.” Recently he declared that the judges on the FISC “have got lifetime tenure as federal judges, and they’re empowered to look over our shoulder at the executive branch to make sure that these programs aren’t being abused.”

The *Post* noted that “the court’s description of its practical limitations contrasts with repeated assurances from the Obama administration and intelligence agency leaders that the court provides central checks and balances on the government’s broad spying efforts.”



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