

NSA head demands end to spying revelations

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In an interview last Thursday, the head of the National Security Agency (NSA), General Keith Alexander, delivered a series of threats against whistleblower Edward Snowden and those who sympathize with and support him, as well as against media outlets that have published Snowden's revelations of massive government spying.

In the interview, taped by the Pentagon for posting on YouTube, Alexander repeated the official line that NSA spying on the American people and millions of others around the world is driven by the need to protect Americans from terrorism.

He claimed that exposure of the secret programs “means that terrorists now have an upper edge in conducting attacks, probably in Europe and potentially in the United States.” He continued: “And our ability to stop them is reduced. So when people die, those that are responsible for leaking it are the ones who should be held accountable.”

Given the sinister record of the American intelligence apparatus in financing and supporting the founders of Al Qaeda and the extensive evidence that US intelligence agencies allowed the 9/11 attacks to take place, this should be taken as a warning that similar provocations could be engineered to provide a pretext for shutting down any further publication of exposures of US government surveillance.

Alexander added an open threat against the media. “We’re taking this beating in the press because of what these reporters are putting out,” he said. “I think it’s wrong that newspaper reporters have all these documents, the 50,000—whatever they have, and are selling them and giving them out as if these—you know, it just doesn’t make sense. We ought to come up with a way of stopping it.”

The NSA chief did not detail what methods might be employed, referring only vaguely to possible court sanctions. However, for the US military/intelligence

apparatus, there is no line that cannot be crossed—including the state killing of whistleblowers like Edward Snowden—in the effort to prevent the exposure of the buildup of an American police state.

Alexander's statements underscore the prevalence within the highest echelons of the American state of a police state mentality that is utterly hostile to any conception of democratic rights. He speaks for an extensive layer of military and intelligence officials as well as politicians whose aim is to criminalize and silence those who expose the real criminals.

The vendetta against such courageous people as Snowden, Julian Assange and Private Bradley Manning has been met with general support from the entire political and media establishment. There is virtually no serious opposition from the erstwhile liberal establishment or any section of the Democratic Party.

On the contrary, under a Democratic president, Barack Obama, pervasive spying on the American people has been expanded well beyond what prevailed under Bush. This has been accompanied by an expansion of drone assassinations, including of American citizens, as well as legislation institutionalizing the indefinite detention of alleged terrorists without charge or trial.

Alexander's attempt to defend police state spying with the all-purpose pretext of the “war on terror” has been rendered all the more absurd by the most recent revelations of NSA tapping of the personal telephones of German Chancellor Angela Merkel and dozens of other heads of government.

Neither Alexander nor any other defender of the mass surveillance programs attempts to present a serious argument that intercepting the phone calls and text messages of Merkel and the leaders of other major countries is a necessary part of a struggle against Al Qaeda terrorists.

It is obviously driven by the aggressive and

hegemonic foreign policy objectives of the American ruling elite.

The trans-Atlantic uproar over spying by the NSA has dealt a blow to the political pretensions of American imperialism. It is increasingly difficult for Washington to posture either as the protagonist in a “war on terror” or as the leader of the “free world.”

As the comments of Alexander demonstrate, however, no amount of protest or pressure will curb the operations of the US military/intelligence apparatus. In the final analysis, the buildup of police state powers by the US government must be traced to the deepening social polarization within the United States—a process that is replicated, to a greater or lesser degree, in every capitalist country.

It is impossible to maintain democratic forms of rule and democratic rights in a society where a tiny handful of financial overlords control economic life and demand the destruction of jobs, living standards and basic social benefits for the working people, who are the vast majority.

Alexander’s threats must be taken as a warning. The defense of democratic rights requires the mobilization of the working class, in the United States and internationally, fighting for a revolutionary socialist program to put an end to the profit system. This is the only serious basis for a struggle against the emerging American police state.



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