

NSA strategy document envisions unrestrained global surveillance

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A top secret National Security Administration (NSA) strategy document leaked by whistleblower Edward Snowden envisions spying on “anyone, anytime, anywhere,” free from all legal restraints, and radical expansions in the NSA’s activities in the period of 2012-2016.

The five-page document dated February 23, 2012, which was published by the *New York Times* on Saturday, is entitled “SIGINT Strategy 2012-2016.” The name of the author does not appear on the document, nor is it clear who was responsible for it.

Among the document’s central themes is that the law has “not kept pace” with the NSA’s “mission.” Translated into plain English, this means that the NSA is knowingly engaged in illegal activity.

The NSA’s strategy is to remedy this situation by campaigning for what amounts to the abolition of basic constitutional rights. Existing law must be “adapted,” the document states, in order to facilitate unlimited spying. “For SIGINT [signals intelligence] to be optimally effective, legal, policy, and process authorities must be as adaptive and dynamic as the technological and operational advances we seek to exploit.”

In fact, the NSA’s spying activities—as well as the activities of the numerous other government agencies engaged in domestic spying—are in flagrant violation of the letter and spirit of the Fourth Amendment, part of the Bill of Rights. This amendment protects the “right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures,” and provides that the government must obtain a warrant based on “probable cause” connecting a targeted person with criminal activity before a search or seizure can be carried out.

The words “Fourth Amendment,” “search warrant,”

“probable cause,” “democracy,” and “Constitution” do not appear in the NSA strategy document. Nor does the document include the word “right” at all. The document does not even invoke “terror,” or the Obama administration’s standard formula of “balancing” individual liberties against national security.

For all practical purposes, the military-intelligence agencies operate without restraint, as if there was no such thing as a Fourth Amendment.

Without mentioning any legal rights its targets might have, the document simply announces that the NSA intends to achieve “mastery of the global network,” i.e., unrestrained global surveillance. To the extent the document obliquely makes reference to legal rights at all, it does so to state that the NSA will “aggressively pursue legal authorities and a policy framework mapped more fully to the information age.”

The document’s most striking feature is that it is written entirely in the language of a business advertising brochure. The document contains numerous references to the NSA’s “external partners,” “stakeholders,” and “customers”(!). It touts the NSA’s “high quality products and services”(!!). This grotesque intersection of the language of the corporate-financial boardroom with the apparatus of state repression is an expression of the malignant growth of the intelligence-industrial complex.

The document refers three times to the NSA’s “business processes,” to “more efficient management of the mission and businesses,” to “market driven forces,” to “internal and external partnerships,” to “global business trends,” and to “strengthening customer relationships.”

The document also hints at possible turf wars between the NSA and other unnamed intelligence agencies that are also involved in spying, perhaps

including the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR), Office of Intelligence and Counterintelligence, Air Force Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (AF ISR), Navy Intelligence, or perhaps other as yet undiscovered agencies. The NSA's strategy involves making sure "to keep SIGINT relevant" and "maintain current mission relevance," noting the growing "mission space for SIGINT."

The document paints a picture of the internal life of the NSA before the exposures by whistle-blower Edward Snowden. Prepared and distributed soon after president Obama was re-elected in 2012, the document sets forth the agency's goals and strategies for the next four years.

Apparently enjoying the full support of the Obama administration, NSA leaders saw no obstacle in the way of their project of establishing "mastery of the global network," which in their words would usher in "the golden age of SIGINT" in the period of 2012 to 2016. In this way, the document is a reminder of the immense service Edward Snowden has performed by bringing this anti-democratic conspiracy to light.

The document refers to the need to "close gaps between the environment and expectations over the next five years." From the NSA's standpoint, if anyone, anywhere in the world, anytime, is engaged in any kind of activity, and the NSA does not know about it, then there exists a "gap" that needs to be closed.

The massive expansion of domestic spying in the US, which exceeds all the traditional bounds of "plausible deniability," is a symptom of the crisis and decay of American capitalism. Determined to impose the cost of the crisis of their system onto the population as a whole, the corporate and financial aristocracy that rules America is bracing itself for popular opposition. Only in this context is it possible to explain the cavalier attitude to democratic rights and the energetic buildup of the machinery of a police state.

More information is still coming to light. This Sunday, Snowden revealed that the NSA has infected 50,000 computer networks with malware. Malware is intrusive software that can be used to take control of a computer, either for the purpose of gaining access to

private information or of disrupting activity. In many countries, creating and distributing malware is a criminal offense.

The NSA calls its malware "Computer Network Exploitation" (CNE). One document leaked by Snowden shows the NSA collaborating with its UK counterpart GCHQ to infect the Belgian telecom company Belgacom with malware.

A person may use a computer for years without knowing that it has been compromised by NSA hackers. The malware presumably allows the NSA to view everything that happens on the computer, and to take control of the computer with the push of a button.

The NSA strategy document concludes its "Values" section with the following sentence: *Our customers and stakeholders can rely on us to provide timely, high quality products and services, because we never stop innovating and improving, and we never give up!*



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