

# Canada facilitated NSA spying on 2010 G8 and G20 summits

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Top secret US National Security Agency (NSA) briefing notes leaked by the former intelligence contractor Edward Snowden reveal that Canada's Conservative government permitted the NSA to spy on the June 2010 G8 and G20 summits held in Huntsville, Ontario and Toronto. Moreover, the NSA was given vital technical support by Canada's own eavesdropping intelligence agency, the Communications Security Establishment Canada or CSEC.

According to a report published last week by Canada's public broadcaster, the CBC, the NSA mounted a six-day spy operation targeting the two summits from the US embassy in Ottawa.

The briefing notes say that the NSA operation was to be "closely co-ordinated with the Canadian partner" and "make it clear," adds the CBC account, "that [CSEC's] cooperation would be absolutely vital to ensuring access to the telecommunications systems that would have been used by espionage targets during the summits."

The notes don't explicitly name these "espionage targets," but their contents and previous revelations about NSA spying on government officials and politicians around the world, from German Chancellor Angela Merkel to Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff, leave no doubt the targets were the heads-of-government attending the two summits and their ministers and aides.

CSEC has for decades played a major role in the NSA's worldwide operations. This goes far beyond the sharing of intelligence. CSEC uses NSA surveillance programs and, according to a *Globe and Mail* report published last Saturday, has access to much of the raw data that the NSA is collecting through its illegal, blanket surveillance of the world's telecommunications. CSEC and the NSA also routinely exchange personnel, and CSEC often joins the NSA in some of its most politically-sensitive global spying operations.

Previous reports based on documents leaked by

Snowden revealed that CSEC assisted the NSA and Britain's Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) in spying on a G20 meeting in London in 2009.

The revelation of the 2010 NSA-CSEC spying operation targeting world leaders, many of them from countries that are ostensibly close friends of the US and Canada, has once again given the lie to the claims of government officials and the media that these agencies exist to protect the American and Canadian peoples from the likes of al-Qaeda.

Rather the NSA and CSEC serve the predatory interests respectively of the US and Canadian ruling elites—supporting foreign military interventions, spying on rival governments, conducting commercial espionage, tracking movements deemed hostile to the interests of North American big business and, last but not least, helping combat the development of political opposition at home.

The NSA briefing notes on the surveillance of the 2010 G8 and G20 meetings dismiss any significant security threat to the summit, stating "there is no specific, credible information" that Islamic extremists are "targeting the event." They then detail the major issues that were to be discussed at the summits, all of them economic concerns.

The notes state that the goal of the spying operation is to support "US policy goals" by "providing support to policymakers." In other words, NSA was tasked with furnishing intelligence to US President Barack Obama and his aides on the positions, reactions, and bargaining strategies of the other summit delegations.

The briefing notes make no mention of the NSA sharing this intelligence with CSEC and the Canadian government, but such sharing—as noted above—is routine. In October, Glenn Greenwald, a journalist who has worked closely with Snowden and co-authored last week's CBC report, revealed that CSEC spied on Brazil's Ministry of Mines. In recent weeks, Greenwald

has repeatedly observed that the files leaked by Snowden contain much material concerning CSEC and that he believes ordinary Canadians will be shocked by the scope and scale of the spying operations in which CSEC is involved.

In June the *Globe and Mail* reported that since 2005 CSEC has been systematically spying on the metadata of Canadians' electronic communications—including telephone calls, text and e-mail messages, and internet use. But the corporate media and the opposition parties, including the trade union-based New Democratic Party (NDP), have refused to warn the public about the grave threat this constitutes to their democratic rights, let alone expose this spying as illegal and unconstitutional.

The US government responded to the exposure of its spying operations at the 2010 summits with its standard refusal to comment on intelligence operations. But in an implicit admission of the veracity of the report, it asserted “as a matter of policy we have made clear that the United States gather foreign intelligence of the type gathered by all nations.”

Taking the same tack as it did following the revelation that CSEC had spied on the Brazilian government, Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper's office responded to the report of the 2010 spying operation by saying, “We do not comment on operational matters related to national security.”

Under the 2001 Anti-Terrorism Act, CSEC is supposed to be legally barred from spying on anyone in Canada. But there are significant exceptions. CSEC is specifically tasked with assisting the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, Royal Canadian Mounted Police and other police agencies in conducting court-sanctioned surveillance in national security investigations. They also can spy on Canadians' communications as part of combating a “foreign threat.”

When asked in parliament last Thursday by NDP leader Thomas Mulcair if CSEC had obtained authorization of a judge “before authorizing and helping the Americans to spy on us in Canada during the G20 summit,” Defence Minister Rob Nicholson sidestepped the question. Resorting to the government's standard refrain, Nicholson declared, “This organization is prohibited from targeting Canadians. And CSEC cannot ask its international partners to act in a way that circumvents Canadians laws.”

This is a flagrant lie. CSEC has been collecting and sifting through the metadata of Canadian electronic communications for years. And the government has

sanctioned this wholesale violation of privacy rights under secret ministerial directives that arbitrarily define metadata as not constituting “constitutionally-protected communications.”

The NDP leader, however, did not raise this issue, nor mount any serious challenge to the government's lying and dissembling about CSEC. During the past six months of ongoing revelations of the massive illegal operations being carried out by CSEC's intimate partner, the NSA, the NDP has aided and abetted the Conservative government's efforts to keep the activities of CSEC shrouded in secrecy. Focusing its energies on the two-bit Senate expenses scandal, it has asked no more than a handful of questions in parliament about CSEC. Moreover, like the Liberals—who vastly expanded CSEC's powers and budget when they last held office, including authorizing CSEC to trawl through the metadata of Canadians' communications—the NDP has made clear that it views CSEC as a vital pillar of the Canadian state. It only wants its activities to be subject to some “oversight” by parliament (that is, by a small committee of state-vetted parliamentarians).

The Harper Conservative government made the Toronto G20 summit the occasion for a vast state provocation, with police taking over much of the downtown of Canada's largest city, and using violence and mass arrests to suppress protests. Last week we learned that in addition CSEC and NSA were jointly conducting a highly sensitive spying operation, thereby furthering a reactionary partnership that has placed the world's communications under systematic surveillance of the type that the police states of the 20th century could only dream of.



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