

New Snowden documents detail political and corporate espionage by US, UK

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The US National Security Agency (NSA) and British Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) have been engaged in aggressive surveillance operations against Germany's political and corporate establishment and against more than 100 heads of state around the world, secret documents disclosed by *Der Spiegel* and the *Intercept* show.

The classified files leaked by whistleblower Edward Snowden to the two publications show that the NSA targeted German Chancellor Angela Merkel and more than 100 other leaders of foreign governments as part of a program known as "Nymrod."

Heads of state listed on the leaked files include, Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi, Somali President Abdullahi Yusuf, Peruvian President Alan Garcia, Belarusian President Aleksandr Lukashenko, Guatemalan President Alvaro Colom, Colombian President Alvaro Uribe, Malian President Amadou Toumain Toure, Syrian President Bashar al-Asad, and Ukrainian Prime Minister and oligarch Yulia Tymoshenko.

The documents also show that GCHQ targeted three German firms in complex operations that involved infiltration of their computer systems and surveillance of employees.

IABG, a security and communications firm with ties to the German state, and similar firms Stellar and Cetel, were apparently targeted for surveillance because they provide communications services to German corporations engaged in lucrative operations such as diamond mining and oil drilling around the world.

"The document notes that GCHQ hoped to identify 'access chokepoints' as part of a wider effort alongside partner spy agencies to 'look at developing possible access opportunities' for surveillance," the *Intercept* reported.

"In other words, infiltrating these companies was viewed as a means to an end for the British agents. Their ultimate targets were likely the customers. Cetel's customers, for instance, include governments that use its communications systems to connect to the Internet in Africa and the Middle East. Stellar provides its communications systems to a diverse range of customers that could potentially be of interest to the spies—including multinational corporations, international organizations, refugee camps, and oil drilling platforms," the *Intercept* wrote.

These are only the latest revelations showing that the NSA's surveillance activities have targeted Germany's leadership. As of yet, Germany has been hesitant to mount a legal challenge to the operations, as such a move could exacerbate already growing tensions between US and German imperialism. "The launch of legal proceedings against GCHQ agents or NSA employees would quickly become a major political issue that would further burden already tense trans-Atlantic relations," *Der Spiegel* wrote.

The documents also show that the NSA's Special Source Operations (SSO), which oversees the agency's "corporate partnerships" with US telecommunications companies including Google, Microsoft, Verizon and AT&T, received an open-ended FISA court authorization in 2013 to conduct surveillance against targets in Germany.

According to *Der Spiegel's* report, the FISA court has granted similar authorizations for blanket surveillance operations against Mexico, Venezuela, Yemen, Brazil, Guatemala, Bosnia, Russia, Sudan and China.

The newest leaks come in the midst of a push by the Obama administration to implement cosmetic "reforms" to the NSA's telephone metadata

surveillance operations. Under the guise of reform, the Obama administration is overseeing the further integration of the state with the tech giants and institutionalization of the surveillance operations. Obama's plan would end bulk collection by the NSA of one type of data—telephone metadata—out of the numerous types being collected by NSA surveillance programs. Moreover, the NSA will still be able to spy on phone numbers more or less at will, once it receives approval from the rubber-stamp FISA court.

The proposal is being promoted by establishment surveillance “critics” as a significant step towards lawful, democratic surveillance. Oregon Senator Ron Wyden spoke in support of the plan Sunday on NBC's “Meet the Press,” while saying he thought that other type of bulk collection should be ended as well. “I believe strongly we ought to ban all dragnet surveillance on law-abiding Americans, not just phone records but also medical records, purchases and others,” Wyden said.

This is a lot of hot air. In fact, dragnet surveillance against Americans and populations around the world is the main purpose of the surveillance system.

The complete incapacity of the institutions of capitalist “democracy” to rein in the spying was starkly demonstrated in recent weeks as evidence emerged that the CIA spied on the Senate Intelligence Committee as it assembled a report on the agency's use of torture and “black site” prisons.

Committee chair Dianne Feinstein addressed the issue on another Sunday interview program, saying as little as possible. I have asked for an apology and statement that it would never happen again,” she said. “I have not received this to this day. That is of concern to me.”

With the US mounting aggressive operations against allied imperialist governments and against the US Congress itself, there can be no doubt that domestic political opponents and militant elements in the US working class are subject to even more far-reaching measures.



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