

# NSA chief calls for more “permeable” barrier between state and tech corporations

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In two speeches this month, US National Security Agency (NSA) Director Admiral Mike Rogers called for a further integration between the NSA and major technology and communications companies.

Speaking to more than 500 corporate, military and academic leaders at the Cyber Education Summit at Georgia Regents University earlier this month, Rogers argued that the needs of cybersecurity are rendering obsolete traditional distinctions between the private sector, the civilian government and the military-intelligence apparatus.

“Traditionally, in our structure as a nation, we have tried to very strongly differentiate between what is a private sector function, what is a governmental function and what is a function that really falls under national security. I would argue cyber crosses all three of those lines,” Rogers said.

In line with the demand advanced in his inaugural address as NSA head for a more “permeable membrane” between the national security agencies and private corporations, Rogers went on to call for effective merging of US government cyber systems with those of major corporations, allowing for direct, continuous communication between corporate databases and the NSA.

“In the end what we have got to get to, I believe, is real-time automated machine-to-machine interface,” Rogers said.

These remarks come as America’s top surveillance agency is experiencing a succession of media exposures of for-profit ventures by top officials of a legally dubious character.

Last week, the NSA announced that the agency’s top official for signals intelligence (SIGINT), Teresa Shea, will leave the agency after reports that she was running a side business specializing in electronic intelligence,

Telic Networks. Shea’s husband also works for a major SIGINT contractor called DRS Signals Solutions.

Shea’s departure follows revelations that the NSA’s Chief Technical Officer Patrick Dowd has been working at least 20 hours per week for ex-NSA director General Keith Alexander’s own private cybersecurity venture, IronNet Cybersecurity. IronNet has already taken in millions in revenues by offering services based on technology patented by General Alexander during his tenure at NSA.

In addition to his own business activities, disclosure documents from early October show that Alexander made substantial investments in a number of tech companies while serving as NSA director. Because their operations focused on information security, the companies that received investment funds from Alexander stood to benefit from the NSA head’s hyping of the threat of cyberwarfare and terrorist attacks against US targets in the wake of the Snowden leaks, stoking accusations of conflict of interest against Alexander.

In a speech delivered Tuesday at the Third Annual Cybersecurity Summit at the US Chamber of Commerce, however, Rogers defended the private sector initiatives by NSA personnel, saying that the agency required continuous exchange of personnel and “flow of partnerships and information back and forth” with private tech firms.

“We’ve got to create a world where people from NSA can leave us for a while and go work in the private sector. And I would also like to create a world where the private sector can come spend a little time with us,” Rogers said.

The systematic transfer of data and technology between the US government and corporations—and between government agencies themselves, both within

the US and internationally—is becoming ever more streamlined.

The NSA leadership, moreover, has already infiltrated undercover agents into tech companies worldwide, as recent leaked documents furnished by Edward Snowden have shown, and has developed secret contracts with major communications providers to insure cooperation with the US government’s data trawling programs (See: “Leaked documents expose secret contracts between NSA and tech companies”).

The NSA is also making its vast electronic warehouses of personal data accessible to the intelligence agencies of other imperialist powers. Britain’s Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) receives transfers of “unlimited bulk intelligence” from the NSA without any warranting process, according to a report published Wednesday by UK-based human rights group Liberty.

“British intelligence agencies can trawl through foreign intelligence material without meaningful restrictions and can keep such material, which includes both communications content and metadata, for up to two years,” the report states.

The drive of the NSA to implement total information sharing between the state and corporations reflects the unwillingness of the military-intelligence establishment to tolerate any obstacles, real or imaginary, to its ability to spy on the entire population at will. For the ruling elite, it is not sufficient to have secret contracts with the corporations and a panoply of surveillance programs mining their data.

On top of all of this, plans are now clearly afoot to implement automatic bulk data sharing between the corporations and the government, in direct violation of the US Constitution and international law.



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