# Amazon announces new cloud to host “Secret” government data

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Amazon Web Services (AWS), the cloud computing company owned by Amazon, announced Monday that they are launching a new “AWS Secret Region” cloud designed to host government data classified as “Secret.” The AWS Secret Region is the most recent product of the company’s $600 million deal reached in 2013 with the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the military-intelligence apparatus, and signals the complete integration of Amazon with the government and spy agencies.

While no details have emerged about the cost, security architecture or design of the Secret Region cloud, leading company and state officials are hailing it as the culmination of Amazon’s deepening partnership with the American spy agencies.

In a post on the “AWS Government, Education, & Nonprofits Blog,” the company proudly proclaims, “With the launch of this new Secret Region, AWS becomes the first and only commercial cloud provider to offer regions to serve government workloads across the full range of data classifications, including Unclassified, Sensitive, Secret, and Top Secret. By using the cloud, the U.S. Government is better able to deliver necessary information and data to mission stakeholders.”

Summarizing the significance of the new storage cloud, Teresa Carlson, vice president at AWS Worldwide Public Sector, said in a statement, “The U.S. Intelligence Community can now execute their missions with a common set of tools, a constant flow of the latest technology and the flexibility to rapidly scale with the mission. The AWS Top Secret Region was launched three years ago as the first air-gapped commercial cloud and customers across the U.S. Intelligence Community have made it a resounding success. Ultimately, this capability allows more agency collaboration, helps get critical information to decision makers faster, and enables an increase in our Nation’s Security.”

John Edwards, the chief information officer of the CIA, declared, “The AWS Secret Region is a key component of the Intel Community’s multi-fabric cloud strategy. It will have the same material impact on the IC at the Secret level that C2S has had at Top Secret.”

The “AWS Top Secret Region” that Carlson and Edwards refer to is a private, off-the-grid computing cloud used solely by the 17 agencies that comprise the military-intelligence state apparatus. The cloud, known as the Commercial Cloud Service (C2S), stores large portions of the internet and telecommunications data collected by the IC agencies. It is a component of the Intelligence Community Information Technology Enterprise (IC ITE) program launched in 2011 in response to the data breaches carried out by Chelsea Manning, which exposed the war crimes carried out by American imperialism in Afghanistan and Iraq.

In a speech given before the 2017 AWS Public Sector Summit in Washington DC last June, Edwards heaped praise upon Amazon for the benefits that the C2S cloud has brought the CIA and other spy agencies. He declared, “It’s the best decision we ever made. It’s the most innovative thing we’ve ever done. It is making a material difference and having a material impact on both the CIA and IC [intelligence community].”

Edwards noted that the cloud has led to significant cost savings, while providing the IC with the ability to “scale vast infrastructures in seconds.” He revealed that “adoption of the cloud across the IC is growing at 208 percent year-over-year.”

Edwards went on to characterize the C2S cloud as the equivalent of a superhero, possessing the superpowers

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of Speed, Power, Scalability, Strength, Durability and Truth, with each attribute as a separate heading on his PowerPoint slides.

Regarding the "Strength" of the C2S cloud, he stated, "I'm never gonna say that anything you do in the cyber world is totally invincible, but this is pretty close. … I would argue and say that this is probably the most secure thing there is out there."

Edwards' claims that C2S is nearly impenetrable are belied by revelations made last week that a massive database created by the Department of Defense (DoD) and hosted on an AWS server has been publicly exposed. The database contained upwards of 1.8 billion internet posts from thousands of people across the world that had been compiled by the Pentagon over the past eight years, apparently as part of a vast intelligence-gathering operation. In all likelihood, this database was classified as Top Secret and therefore could have been hosted on the supposedly impenetrable C2S cloud.

Breaking the story, US cybersecurity firm UpGuard wrote, "UpGuard Director of Cyber Risk Research Chris Vickery discovered three Amazon Web Services S3 cloud storage buckets configured to allow any AWS global authenticated user to browse and download the contents; AWS accounts of this type can be acquired with a free sign-up."

Describing the character of the released documents, UpGuard noted, "The repositories appear to contain billions of public internet posts and news commentary scraped from the writings of many individuals from a broad array of countries, including the United States, by CENTCOM and PACOM, two Pentagon unified combatant commands charged with US military operations across the Middle East, Asia, and the South Pacific."

The character and immense scale of this data gathering operation provide a glimpse into the profoundly antidemocratic spying activities which the Pentagon and spy agencies engage in every day, and which Amazon has been profiting from handsomely in recent years.

The internet posts compiled by the Pentagon included "content captured from news sites, comment sections, web forums, and social media sites like Facebook, featuring multiple languages and originating from countries around the world," according to UpGuard.

As Google and other tech companies are working with the American state to censor the internet and countries around the world prepare their own plans for internet censorship—all in the name of combating the bogeyman of "fake news"—the Pentagon has secretly been engaged in mass surveillance of the global population's online activity, in close consultation with Amazon.

The creation of the new Secret Region cloud, alongside the broader drive toward internet censorship and surveillance, highlights the growing integration of all the major tech corporations with the state in preparation for a vast expansion of war abroad and attacks on democratic rights within the US.

Last Thursday, the Senate voted to approve the $700 billion National Defense Authorization Act by a voice vote, after it quickly passed through the House of Representatives by a bipartisan vote of 356 to 70. While significantly increasing troop levels and providing funding for more ships and military equipment, the budget also mandates the creation of "e-commerce portals," which will eventually lead to the funneling of billions of dollars directly to Amazon.

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