

# Orwell's Back: Air Force Bans Personnel from Reading News Stories Reporting NSA Scandal

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by Kerry Picket

*The Air Force's 624th Operations Center sent an [e-mail](#) with a NOTAM (Notice to Airmen) that prohibits them from accessing and reading news stories related to the current National Security Agency snooping controversy on the Air Force's NIPRNET (Non-Secure Internet Protocol Router Network) systems.*

The [624th Operations Center](#), located at Lackland Air Force Base in Texas, is the operational arm for the 24th Air Force's cyberspace operations capability.



The e-mail, first attained by Shane Vander Hart, President of [4:15 Communications, LLC](#), posted the memo on his [site](#) after receiving an e-mail from a mother whose son is stationed with the U.S. Air Force in the Middle East. The NOTAM warns airmen about the risks of simple web searches regarding the NSA and Verizon phone records scandals:

I wanted to make sure that all of you read this because just doing a simple search could jeopardize your future. In summary, anything to do with the recent news about the NSA and Verizon phone records are considered classified and searching news or records about these on our NIPRNET computers is unauthorized. Thanks!

The executive summary states that documents associated with the NSA story may potentially be classified, even though the information is publicly available on the internet:

Classified documents regarding Verizon phone record collection and court order have been identified as being hosted on publicly accessible Internet Web Sites, most notably "The Guardian" news site. Viewing and/or downloading these documents on Air Force NIPRNET computers could constitute a Classified Message Incident. Therefore, users are not to access these file (sic) for any reason (i.e. viewing, downloading, forwarding, etc.)

Edward Snowden, a 29-year old former technical assistant for the CIA and current employee of NSA defense contractor Booz Allen Hamilton, [revealed himself](#) as the NSA leaker over the weekend. Interviewed by the *The Guardian* in a Hong Kong hotel room, Snowden told the U.K. publication, "I don't want to live in a society that does these sort of things."

“I do not want to live in a world where everything I do and say is recorded,” he continued. “That is not something I am willing to support or live under... I can’t in good conscience allow the U.S. government to destroy privacy, Internet freedom and basic liberties for people around the world with this massive surveillance machine they’re secretly building.”

Booz Allen released a [statement](#) Sunday evening confirming Snowden’s employment with them for less than three months, assigned to a team in Hawaii.

“News reports that this individual has claimed to have leaked classified information are shocking, and if accurate, this action represents a grave violation of the code of conduct and core values of our firm,” the statement reads. “We will work closely with our clients and authorities in their investigation of this matter.”

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