

Prism “Voice Collection”, SMS Messages, E-mail: New Evidence of Widespread NSA Spying on France, Mexico

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France’s *Le Monde* published a report Monday based on documents leaked by Edward Snowden describing National Security Agency (NSA) spying operations directed against the French population and the French business and political leadership. Between December 2012 and January 2013, according to *Le Monde*, the NSA collected over 70 million French communications, which were then categorized either as “Drtbox” or “Whitebox.”

The collection process included reading and listening to the content of communications.

The report provides yet another exposure of the Obama administration’s global spying operations, which are carried out in flagrant violation of US and international law. *Le Monde* summarized the NSA spying as “intrusion on a vast scale, both into the private space of French citizens and the secrets of major national firms.” Describing aspects of the surveillance, *Le Monde* wrote, “When a telephone number is used in France, it activates a signal that automatically triggers the recording of the call. Apparently this surveillance also picks up SMS messages and their content using key words.” *Le Monde* also released a Power Point presentation titled “PRISM/US-984X Overview” detailing NSA electronic surveillance procedures. The slide, headed “You Should Use Both,” lists “upstream collection of communications on fiber cables and infrastructure as data flows past (FAIRVIEW, STORBREW, BLARNEY, OAKSTAR” and “PRISM collection directly from the servers of these US Service Providers: Microsoft, Yahoo, Google, Facebook, PalTalk, AOL, Skype, YouTube, Apple.”

The slides show that the NSA carries out “voice collection” using both upstream and PRISM collection methods.

One slide, entitled PRISM Collection, lists “current providers” as “Microsoft (Hotmail, etc.), Google, Yahoo!, Facebook, PalTalk, YouTube, Skype, AOL, Apple.” The slide reads: “What Will You Receive in Collection (Surveillance and Stored Comms)? It varies by provider: in general: E-mail, Chat-video, voice, Videos, Photos, Stored data, VoIP, File transfers, Video Conferencing, Notifications of target activity-logins, etc., Online Social Network details, Special Requests.”

The slides also contain a chart showing the dates when PRISM began collecting data from the various providers, from Microsoft in September of 2007 to Apple in October of 2012, along with detailed flow charts illustrating the various components of the surveillance apparatus.

Top French officials expressed indignation over the *Le Monde* report. Speaking to Europe 1 Radio, French Interior Minister Manuel Valls described the spying exposure as “shocking” and declared, “If an allied country is spying on France, it’s totally unacceptable.”

The French government publicly demanded an explanation from the American ambassador. US Secretary of State John Kerry arrived in Paris Monday and was set to meet the following day with Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius to discuss issues relating to the Middle East and Iran.

Fabius commented, “This sort of practice between partners that invades privacy is totally unacceptable and we have to make sure, very quickly, that this no longer happens.”

In light of previous revelations that the NSA spies on US allies such as Mexico, Brazil, England and Germany, it is implausible that France’s political establishment would be genuinely shocked by the new revelations. French officials began inquiries into the NSA operations during the summer after it became public that US agency had targeted various European governments for surveillance.

France 24 interviewed former French Air Force General Alain Charret on the matter. Charret said that NSA spying was already well known to the French government, that France has surveillance programs of its own, and that the legal authorities of the European Union are powerless to prevent mass spying by the NSA on the continent because the data access points are not on French soil.

“When we say that the NSA is spying in France, we must realize that the agency is using satellites or underwater cables that are not on French territory,” Charret said. “Even if the European Court of Human Rights condemned the NSA for violation privacy, it would not prevent the intelligence agency from continuing to listen to telephone conversations in France and elsewhere,” he continued.

According to Charret, “there have been proven examples of NSA wiretapping that cost French companies lucrative contracts in Brazil and Saudi Arabia.” He added that over the summer, French officials were instructed to use “specially encrypted telephones when discussing certain information,” which indicated that “French authorities were aware that the NSA was listening to communications of some French people.”

With regard to the reaction of Valls and Fabius, Charret said, “This whole thing smacks of hypocrisy... we probably have a programme that resembles the one in the US, albeit on a smaller scale.”

NSA spying on foreign governments has produced frictions between the US and Latin American governments. Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff cancelled a trip to the US in September after learning that she had been targeted by the NSA.

According to *Der Spiegel*, the NSA’s Tailored Access Operations (TAO) division hacked into then-Mexican President Felipe Calderon’s email account in May of 2010. *Der Spiegel* said that documents acquired from Snowden show that the NSA penetrated a “central server” in the computer network used by the Mexican president, giving the agency access to Calderon’s communications along with those of other members of his cabinet.

“This practice is unacceptable, illegal and against Mexican and international law,” said Mexico’s foreign ministry in a statement released Monday.

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