

The Washington Post Reveals ‘Top Secret America’

Laying the exceedingly expensive groundwork for a Fascist America...

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“Some 1,271 government organizations and 1,931 private companies work on programs related to counterterrorism, homeland security and intelligence in about 10,000 locations across the United States. (2) An estimated 854,000 people, nearly 1.5 times as many people as live in Washington, D.C., hold top-secret security clearances. (3) In Washington and the surrounding area, 33 building complexes for top-secret intelligence work are under construction or have been built since September 2001. Together they occupy the equivalent of almost three Pentagons or 22 U.S. Capitol buildings – about 17 million square feet of space. (4) Many security and intelligence agencies do the same work, creating redundancy and waste. For example, 51 federal organizations and military commands, operating in 15 U.S. cities, track the flow of money to and from terrorist networks. (5) Analysts who make sense of documents and conversations obtained by foreign and domestic spying share their judgment by publishing 50,000 intelligence reports each year – a volume so large that many are routinely ignored.”

The Washington Post has unveiled its comprehensive, alarming, and much-anticipated report on “[Top Secret America](#).” The dedicated site details the billions of dollars in private, for-profit intelligence operations that have emerged since Sept. 11, 2001, which the Post calls our “fourth branch” of government. Led by reporters William Arkin and Pulitzer Prize-winner Dana Priest, the investigation was two years in the making and [shook up the vast U.S. intelligence community even before it was released](#). The “Top Secret America” [website](#) includes articles, videos, interactive features, and maps all begging to be explored. But here’s the executive summary.

The Intelligence-Industrial Complex [Priest and Arkin write](#), “This is not exactly President Dwight D. Eisenhower’s ‘military-industrial complex,’ which emerged with the Cold War and centered on building nuclear weapons to deter the Soviet Union. This is a national security enterprise with a more amorphous mission: defeating transnational violent extremists. Much of the information about this mission is classified. That is the reason it is so difficult to gauge the success and identify the problems of Top Secret America, including whether money is being spent wisely. ... the Bush administration and Congress gave agencies more money than they were capable of responsibly spending. ... In all, at least 263 organizations have been created or reorganized as a response to 9/11. Each has required more people, and those people have required more administrative and logistic support. ... With so many more employees, units and organizations, the lines of responsibility began to blur.”

Our Fourth Branch The [introductory video](#) states, “In response to 9/11, a fourth branch has emerged. It is protected from public scrutiny by overwhelming secrecy. ... It has become so big, and the lines of responsibility so blurred, that even our nation’s leaders don’t have a

handle on it. Where is it? It's being built from coast to coast, hidden within some of America's most familiar cities and neighborhoods. In Colorado, in Nebraska, in Texas, in Florida, in the suburbs of Washington, DC. Top Secret America includes hundreds of federal departments and agencies operating out of 1300 facilities around this country. They contract of nearly 2,000 companies. In all, more people than live in our nation's capital have top secret security clearance." The screen flashes "850,000 Americans with top secret clearance."

Why This Is Dangerous [The Post's editors write](#) in an introductory note, "When it comes to national security, all too often no expense is spared and few questions are asked - with the result an enterprise so massive that nobody in government has a full understanding of it. It is, as Dana Priest and William M. Arkin have found, ubiquitous, often inefficient and mostly invisible to the people it is meant to protect and who fund it. ... Within a responsible framework, our objective is to provide as much information as possible, so readers gain a real, granular understanding of the scale and breadth of the top-secret world we are describing."

5 Points on the Private Spy Industry's Huge Size [Priest and Arkin write](#), "(1) Some 1,271 government organizations and 1,931 private companies work on programs related to counterterrorism, homeland security and intelligence in about 10,000 locations across the United States. (2) An estimated 854,000 people, nearly 1.5 times as many people as live in Washington, D.C., hold top-secret security clearances. (3) In Washington and the surrounding area, 33 building complexes for top-secret intelligence work are under construction or have been built since September 2001. Together they occupy the equivalent of almost three Pentagons or 22 U.S. Capitol buildings - about 17 million square feet of space. (4) Many security and intelligence agencies do the same work, creating redundancy and waste. For example, 51 federal organizations and military commands, operating in 15 U.S. cities, track the flow of money to and from terrorist networks. (5) Analysts who make sense of documents and conversations obtained by foreign and domestic spying share their judgment by publishing 50,000 intelligence reports each year - a volume so large that many are routinely ignored."

How This Size Makes National Security Impossible [Priest and Arkin explain](#):

Underscoring the seriousness of these issues are the conclusions of retired Army Lt. Gen. John R. Vines, who was asked last year to review the method for tracking the Defense Department's most sensitive programs. Vines, who once commanded 145,000 troops in Iraq and is familiar with complex problems, was stunned by what he discovered.

"I'm not aware of any agency with the authority, responsibility or a process in place to coordinate all these interagency and commercial activities," he said in an interview. "The complexity of this system defies description."

The result, he added, is that it's impossible to tell whether the country is safer because of all this spending and all these activities. "Because it lacks a synchronizing process, it inevitably results in message dissonance, reduced effectiveness and waste," Vines said. "We consequently can't effectively assess whether it is making us more safe."

The Debate

[Top Secret America](#) The Editors, The Washington Post

[Hidden World, Growing Beyond Control](#) Dana Priest and William Arkin, The Washington Post

[Note From the Editors](#) The Editors, The Washington Post

<http://www.theatlanticwire.com/opinions/view/opinion/The-Washington-Post-Reveals-Top-Secret-America-4362/t>

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