

# Why Does Anyone Still Believe the NSA?

By [Washington's Blog](#)

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Theme: [Intelligence](#), [Police State & Civil Rights](#)

The NSA and other intelligence officials have been [repeatedly caught lying about their spying programs](#).

Officials in the legislative, judicial and executive branches of government all say that the mass surveillance on Americans is unnecessary:

- [3 Senators with top secret clearance](#) “have reviewed this surveillance extensively and have seen *no evidence* that the bulk collection of Americans’ phone records has provided *any intelligence of value* that could not have been gathered through less intrusive means”
- [Another Senator with top secret clearance agrees](#), and so does the [congress member who wrote the Patriot Act](#), and [more than 100 congress members](#) from both parties
- As does [the official panel created by President Obama to review NSA spying](#), made up of top former White House officials and other government insiders, including the head of counter-terrorism under Clinton and Bush and former deputy CIA director Michael J. Morrell
- NBC News [reports](#):

A member of the White House review panel on NSA surveillance said he was “absolutely” surprised when he discovered the agency’s lack of evidence that the bulk collection of telephone call records had thwarted any terrorist attacks. “It was, ‘Huh, hello? What are we doing here?’” said Geoffrey Stone, a University of Chicago law professor....

“That was stunning. That was the ballgame,” said one congressional intelligence official, who asked not to be publicly identified. “It flies in the face of everything that they have tossed at us.”

The conclusions of the panel’s reports were at direct odds with public statements by President Barack Obama and U.S. intelligence officials.

- A non-profit, bipartisan policy group says that NSA mass surveillance has [no impact on terrorism](#)
- CNN terrorism expert Peter Bergen says that mass surveillance is [not needed to stop another 9/11](#)

- Former president [Clinton \(and apparently Carter, as well\), agree](#) that mass surveillance is unnecessary
- As do the [chairs of the 9/11 Commission](#) which was created by Congress and the White House
- As does the [counter-terrorism czar under the Clinton and Bush administrations](#), Richard Clarke. And [see this](#)
- As does a [federal judge](#) (and [see this](#))

Top terrorism and security experts also agree, saying that:

- Mass spying by the NSA has [never stopped a single terrorist attack](#)
- Mass surveillance [doesn't protect us from terrorism](#)
- Mass spying actually [interferes with our ability to stop terrorism](#)

Indeed, the NSA *itself* no longer claims that its mass spying program has stopped terror attacks or saved lives. Instead, intelligence spokesmen themselves now claim that mass spying is just an ["insurance policy" to give "peace of mind"](#).

But given that mass surveillance by governments on their own people have [always been used – for at least 500 years – to crush dissent](#), that the NSA has a [long history of spying on Congress](#) for political purposes, and that high-level NSA whistleblowers say that the NSA is using spying to [blackmail politicians and social critics](#) and to [prosecute people the government dislikes](#), the question is whose peace of mind the programs preserve

And while the NSA claims that disclosure of its spying programs hurts America's security, that's what authoritarians *always* say. For example:

- When leakers disclosed that the FBI was conducting mass spying on – and smearing – anti-war Americans, attorney general John Mitchell [said](#) that the leaks would "endanger" the lives of government agents
- Founding Fathers [Benjamin Franklin](#) and [Samuel Adams](#) did [exactly what Edward Snowden did](#) ... and were likewise [labeled as traitors](#) by the British government

So how can *anyone* believe the NSA at this point?

Unfortunately, fear of terror [makes people unable to think straight](#) ... and when the government undertakes a large, idiotic project – like launching the Iraq war – many people will [go to great lengths to grasp at straws](#) to try to rationalize the government's ill-conceived campaign.

The minority of Americans who believe the NSA have – sadly – [fallen for the same trick](#) ...

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