

HOME PAGE

TODAY'S PAPER

VIDEO

MOST POPULAR

U.S. Edition

ryanjeffery...

Help

The New York Times

U.S.

Search All NYTimes.com

Go

WORLD

U.S.

N.Y. / REGION

BUSINESS

TECHNOLOGY

SCIENCE

HEALTH

SPORTS

OPINION

ARTS

STYLE

TRAVEL

JOBS

REAL ESTATE

AUTOS

POLITICS

EDUCATION

TEXAS

NEU

Digital-Tachograf Funktionen

eTACHOGRAPH

Die verbleibende Lenkzeit wird von der Zentrale in Echtzeit überwacht.

Advertise on NYTimes.com

N.S.A. Gathers Data on Social Connections of U.S. Citizens

By JAMES RISEN and LAURA POITRAS
Published: September 28, 2013 | 851 Comments

WASHINGTON — Since 2010, the [National Security Agency](#) has been exploiting its huge collections of data to create sophisticated graphs of some Americans’ social connections that can identify their associates, their locations at certain times, their traveling companions and other personal information, according to newly disclosed documents and interviews with officials.

Enlarge This Image



Carolyn Kaster/Associated Press
Gen. Keith Alexander, the director of the National Security Agency, testified on Thursday before the Senate Intelligence Committee.

Multimedia



Documents on N.S.A. Efforts to Diagram Social Networks of U.S. Citizens

Related

Senators Push to Preserve N.S.A. Phone Surveillance (September 27, 2013)

The spy agency began allowing the analysis of phone call and e-mail logs in November 2010 to examine Americans’ networks of associations for foreign intelligence purposes after N.S.A. officials lifted restrictions on the practice, according to documents provided by Edward J. Snowden, the former N.S.A. contractor.

The policy shift was intended to help the agency “discover and track” connections between intelligence targets overseas and people in the United States, according to an N.S.A. memorandum from January 2011. The agency was authorized to conduct “large-scale graph analysis on very large sets of communications metadata without having to check foreignness” of every e-mail address, phone number or other identifier, the document said. Because of concerns about infringing on the privacy of American citizens, the computer analysis of such data had previously been permitted only for foreigners.

The agency can augment the communications data with material from public, commercial and other sources, including bank codes, insurance information, Facebook profiles, passenger manifests, voter registration rolls and GPS location information, as well as property records and unspecified tax data, according to the documents. They do not indicate any restrictions on the use of such

FACEBOOK

TWITTER

GOOGLE+

SAVE

E-MAIL

SHARE

PRINT

SINGLE PAGE

REPRINTS

12 YEARS A SLAVE

WATCH THE TRAILER

Log in to see what your friends are sharing on nytimes.com. [Privacy Policy](#) | [What's This?](#) [Log In With Facebook](#)

What's Popular Now

How 5 Countries Could Become 14

N.S.A. Gathers Data on Social Connections of U.S. Citizens

Advertise on NYTimes.com

eDreams

München - Tel Aviv Jaffa

Nur noch wenige Plätze!

307,78 €

Jetzt buchen

Köln - Tel Aviv Jaffa

Nur noch wenige Plätze!

222,74 €

Jetzt buchen

Berlin - Amsterdam

Nur noch wenige Plätze!

124,98 €

Jetzt buchen

Berlin - Tel Aviv Jaffa

Nur noch wenige Plätze!

362,49 €

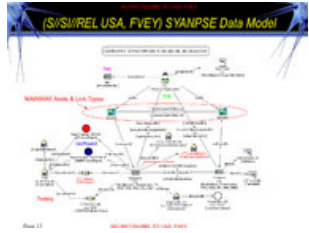
Jetzt buchen

Connect With Us on Twitter

Follow @NYTNational for breaking news and headlines.

Twitter List: Reporters and Editors

[Enlarge This Image](#)



This slide from an N.S.A. PowerPoint presentation shows one of the ways the agency uses e-mail and phone data to analyze the relationships of foreign intelligence targets.

Readers' Comments

Readers shared their thoughts on this article.

[Read All Comments \(851\)](#) »

An agency spokeswoman, asked about the analyses of Americans' data, said, "All data queries must include a foreign intelligence justification, period."

"All of N.S.A.'s work has a foreign intelligence purpose," the spokeswoman added. "Our activities are centered on counterterrorism, counterproliferation and cybersecurity."

The legal underpinning of the policy change, she said, was a 1979 Supreme Court ruling that Americans could have no expectation of privacy about what numbers they had called. Based on that ruling, the Justice Department and the Pentagon decided that it was permissible to create contact chains using Americans' "metadata," which includes the timing, location and other details of calls and e-mails, but not their content. The agency is not required to seek warrants for the analyses from the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court.

N.S.A. officials declined to identify which phone and e-mail databases are used to create the social network diagrams, and the documents provided by Mr. Snowden do not specify them. The agency did say that the large database of Americans' domestic phone call records, which was revealed by Mr. Snowden in June and caused bipartisan alarm in Washington, was excluded. (N.S.A. officials have previously acknowledged that the agency has done limited analysis in that database, collected under provisions of the [Patriot Act](#), exclusively for people who might be linked to terrorism suspects.)

But the agency has multiple collection programs and databases, the former officials said, adding that the social networking analyses relied on both domestic and international metadata. They spoke only on the condition of anonymity because the information was classified.

"enrichment" data, and several former senior Obama administration officials said the agency drew on it for both Americans and foreigners.

N.S.A. officials declined to say how many Americans have been caught up in the effort, including people involved in no wrongdoing. The documents do not describe what has resulted from the scrutiny, which links phone numbers and e-mails in a "contact chain" tied directly or indirectly to a person or organization overseas that is of foreign intelligence interest.

The new disclosures add to the growing body of knowledge in recent months about the N.S.A.'s access to and use of private information concerning Americans, prompting lawmakers in Washington to call for reining in the agency and President Obama to order an examination of its surveillance policies. Almost everything about the agency's operations is hidden, and the decision to revise the limits concerning Americans was made in secret, without review by the nation's intelligence court or any public debate. As far back as 2006, a Justice Department memo warned of the potential for the "misuse" of such information without adequate safeguards.

James Risen reported from Washington and New York. Laura Poitras, a freelance

MOST E-MAILED

RECOMMENDED FOR YOU

31

articles viewed recently

[All Recommendations](#)



1. [CROSS CUTS](#)
[Never-Ending Story](#)

2. [Movie Review: 'Don Jon'](#)



3. [OP-ED CONTRIBUTOR](#)
[How Do You Say 'Blog' in German?](#)

4. [De Niro to Replace James Gandolfini in HBO Drama](#)

5. [Movie Review: 'Muscle Shoals'](#)



6. [MAUREEN DOWD](#)
[Creeping Cloud](#)

7. [Senators Push to Preserve N.S.A. Phone Surveillance](#)

8. [The 65th Emmy Awards](#)



9. [Former F.B.I. Agent to Plead Guilty in Press Leak](#)

10. [Movie Review: 'Metallica...'](#)

[Go to Your Recommendations](#) »
[What's This?](#) | [Don't Show](#)

The New York Times Store
[nytstore.com](#)



Dries Van Noten: Gold Standard

ALSO IN GLOBAL FASHION »

[Azzedine Alaïa: The Greatest Couturier Who Never Bore the Name](#)

[Balenciaga: Sportswear and Ease](#)

The New York Times International Herald Tribune



1 | [2](#) | [3](#) [NEXT PAGE](#) »

journalist, reported from Berlin.

A version of this article appears in print on September 29, 2013, on page A1 of the New York edition with the headline: N.S.A. Examines Social Networks Of U.S. Citizens.

SAVE

E-MAIL

SHARE

851 Comments

Readers shared their thoughts on this article.

ALL

READER PICKS

NYT PICKS

Newest

Comments Closed



Get Free E-mail Alerts on These Topics

- [National Security Agency](#)
- [Surveillance of Citizens by Government](#)
- [Wiretapping and Other Eavesdropping Devices and Methods](#)
- [United States Politics and Government](#)

Ads by Google





what's this?

[German health insurance](#)

1 of largest providers: security & extensive health care for everyone!
[AOK.de/Health-Insurance](#)

INSIDE NYTIMES.COM



<div>SPORTS »</div> <div></div> <div>Goodbyes Won't Get Any Easier for Girardi</div>	<div>OPINION »</div> <div><div>Stone: Enigma of Chinese Medicine</div><div>If a system of medical treatment practiced for thousands of years can't meet Western scientific standards, should it be dismissed?</div></div>	<div>BOOKS »</div> <div></div> <div>The Botany of Desire</div>	<div>MUSIC »</div> <div></div> <div>Music With a Message About Poverty</div>	<div>OPINION »</div> <div><div>Op-Ed: Nixon and Kissinger's Forgotten Shame</div><div>They aided a regime as it killed thousands of Bangladeshis.</div></div>	<div>HEALTH »</div> <div></div> <div>A Youthful Glow, Radiating From Within</div>
--	---	---	--	---	--