

Latest Glenn Greenwald Scoop Vindicates One Of The Original NSA Whistleblowers

By Michael Kelly – June 27th, 2013

William Binney – one of the best mathematicians and code breakers in National Security Agency (NSA) history – worked for America's premier covert intelligence gathering organization for 32 years before resigning in late 2001 because he "could not stay after the NSA began purposefully violating the Constitution."

Binney claims that the NSA took one of the programs he built, known as ThinThread, and started using the program and members of his team to spy on virtually every U.S. citizen under the code-name Stellar Wind.

Thanks to NSA whistleblower/leaker Edward Snowden, documents detailing the top-secret surveillance program have now been published for the first time.

And they corroborate what Binney has said for years.

From Glenn Greenwald and Spencer Ackerman of The Guardian:

The collection of email metadata on Americans began in late 2001, under a top-secret NSA program started shortly after 9/11, according to the documents. Known as Stellar Wind, the program initially did not rely on the authority of any court – and initially restricted the NSA from analyzing records of emails between communicants wholly inside the US.

However, the NSA subsequently gained authority to "analyze communications metadata associated with United States persons and persons believed to be in the United States," according to a secret Justice Department memo from 2007 that was obtained by the Guardian.

Binney says that ThinThread was built to track electronic activities – phone calls, emails, banking and travel records, social media, etc. – and map them to collect "all the attributes that any individual has" in every type of activity and build a real-time profile based on that data.

"So that now I can pull your entire life together from all those domains and map it out and show your entire life over time," Binney told documentarian Laura Poitras in "The Program"

(emphasis ours). Binney added that the purpose of the program is "to be able to monitor what people are doing" and who they are doing it with.

Greenwald and Ackerman, citing the NSA documents, describe how mining metadata from U.S. phone calls and especially Internet communications, which continues to this day, allows the NSA to perform "contact chaining" by which the agency can analyze "networks with two degrees of separation (two hops) from [a] target."

From The Guardian (emphasis ours):

"The calls you make can reveal a lot, but now that so much of our lives are mediated by the internet, your IP [internet protocol] logs are really a real-time map of your brain: what are you reading about, what are you curious about, what personal ad are you responding to (with a dedicated email linked to that specific ad), what online discussions are you participating in, and how often?" said Julian Sanchez of the Cato Institute.

"Seeing your IP logs – and especially feeding them through sophisticated analytic tools – is a way of getting inside your head that's in many ways on par with reading your diary," Sanchez added.

On July 2 Binney, along with two other former NSA employees, agreed to provide evidence in the Electronic Frontier Foundation's lawsuit (Jewel vs. NSA) that alleges the U.S. government operates an illegal mass surveillance program.

Given the latest leaks, that testimony looks rock solid.

And Greenwald and Ackerman report that the NSA's Special Source Operations (SSO) directorate have "ongoing plans to expand metadata collection."

"I should apologize to the American people," Binney told Jane Mayer of The New Yorker. "It's violated everyone's rights. It can be used to eavesdrop on the whole world."