



The NSA's Rent Is Too Damn High

By: Steve Hanke - October 30, 2013

For months, the American public has received a steady stream of new information detailing the massive scale and scope of the United States's spying activities. Of course, maintaining a surveillance state powerful enough to reach into the inboxes of world leaders, friend and foe, is not cheap. Indeed, as the *Washington Post* revealed when it released portions of the so-called Black Budget [\[link\]](#), this year's price tag on America's spook infrastructure comes out to a whopping \$52.6 billion.

This is, of course, a tremendous sum — more than double the size of the Department of Agriculture, more than triple the size of NASA; the list goes on. But what really puts this number into perspective is its average cost to each American taxpayer, or what I would call the NSA and associated agencies' "rent [\[link\]](#)."

Yes, the NSA's rent, charged to every taxpayer living under its web of surveillance, comes out to an exorbitant \$574 per year. If this is the price the federal government [\[link\]](#) is charging American taxpayers to have their own privacy invaded, then I say the NSA's rent is too damn high.

Normally, at the end of one of these blogs, I would ask a rhetorical question like, "Washington, are you listening?" But in this case, we know Washington is listening, and now we know how much we're being charged for it.