

Confirmed: NSA's surveillance of mobile phones specifically targeted Americans

By: J. D. Heyes - June 19, 2013

"Official" Washington - the establishment political cabal made up of members of both major parties which has "ruled" the nation's capital for generations - has been frantically trying to downplay recent revelations that the National Security Administration (NSA) obtained the phone records from millions of Americans via a top secret court order.

After all, they argue, the NSA is only trying to protect the country. After all, they argue, the threat of terrorism is omnipresent and requires 24/7/365 diligence.

But what none of the ruling cabal are talking about is why the NSA's spying was not aimed at foreign targets, as they usually are, and why the secret order specifically targeted Americans.

In fact, according to Forbes, the secret spying - which was first uncovered by the Guardian newspaper in Britain - "explicitly excluded those outside the United States."

Targeting Americans only

Per the magazine:

In a top secret order obtained by the Guardian newspaper and published [June 12], the FBI on the NSA's behalf demanded that [telecom giant] Verizon turn over all metadata for phone records originating in the United States for the three months beginning in late April and ending on the 19th of July. That metadata includes all so-called "non-content" data for millions of American customers' phone calls, such as the subscriber data, recipients, locations, times and durations of every call made during that period.

The sheer scope of the surveillance order is breathtaking enough, and reminds some of the wiretapping scandal during the Bush administration, in which no warrants were issued. But what is worse - and what has privacy experts up in arms - is the fact that only calls from within the U.S. were targeted, not those originating in other countries.

"It is hereby ordered that [Verizon Business Network Services'] Custodian of Records shall produce to the National Security Agency...all call detail records or 'telephony metadata' created by Verizon for communications (i) between the United States and abroad; or (ii) wholly within the United States, including local telephone calls," the order read, according to the copy published by the Guardian. "This Order does not require Verizon to include telephony metadata for communications wholly originating and terminating in foreign countries."

The classified and top secret order originated with the FBI, but it states clearly that all of the data is to be turned over to the NSA. "That means the leaked document may serve as one of the first concrete pieces of evidence that the NSA's spying goes beyond foreigners to include Americans, despite its charter specifically disallowing surveillance of those within the United States," Forbes reported.

Keep in mind that the data mining took place as a result of a lawful court order, which means the constitutionally questionable actions were officially sanctioned by a federal court. That is chilling.

"In many ways it's even more troubling than [Bush era] warrantless wiretapping, in part because the program is purely domestic," Alex Abdo, a staff attorney with the American Civil Liberties Union's National Security Project told Forbes. "But this is also an indiscriminate dragnet. Say what you will about warrantless wiretapping, at least it was targeted at agents of Al Qaeda. This includes every customer of Verizon Business Services."

The leaked document was reportedly issued by the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court, which was established under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act and which operates in secret. The act and the court was first established in 1987 but broadened after the 9/11 attacks, with the express goal of intercepting communications between foreign agents and enemies outside of the country attempting to communicate with their agents within the U.S.

That coincides with the NSA's charter, which is to target foreign communications, not those originating within the United States.

Spying has gone on longer than a few months

"The overall purpose of this program is to identify foreign terrorists," Julian Sanchez, a research fellow with the CATO Institute focused on privacy and civil liberties, told Forbes. "But in fact it extends well beyond whether the individual you're investigating is foreign. If you think an American citizens' email has information about what a foreign power or individual is doing, that's 'relevant.' The purpose of the investigation is not a constraint on the target or the people from whom the information is sought."

He adds: "If they data mine huge blocks of call records, they're getting lots of innocent Americans' data. But the argument, I imagine, is 'we're doing data mining to look for suspicious patterns to help us identify foreign terrorists.'"

In the wake of the disclosure of the secret order, the ruling cabal is attempting to justify the actions by claiming they in fact stopped potential terrorist attacks.

The June 8 issue of Britain's Daily Mail newspaper reported that Rep. Mike Rogers, R-Mich., head of the House Intelligence Committee, credited the NSA's domestic spying program from thwarting an attack on the NYC subway system - in 2009. That is an admission that the NSA has been spying on Americans for much longer than just three months this year.