



Obama announces new limits on NSA surveillance programs – live reaction

Tom McCarthy

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- Speech outlines changes taken from NSA review panel
- Changes to include storing telephone data in private entity
- Reforms will not end controversial surveillance practices

Julian Sanchez ([@normative](#)), research fellow at the [Cato Institute](#), sees some "**welcome first steps**" in the president's speech but notes that the devil's in the details. "The president's speech proposed some welcome first steps toward appropriately limiting an expanding surveillance state – notably, an end to the NSA's bulk phone metadata program in its current form, and a recognition that judges, not NSA analysts, must determine whose records will be scrutinized," [Sanchez writes](#):

The details are important, however. Obama's speech left open the possibility that bulk collection might continue with some third party--which would in effect be an arm of government--as a custodian. If records are left with phone carriers, on the other hand, it's important to resist any new legal mandate that would require longer or more extensive retention of private data than ordinary business purposes require.

It was disappointing, however, to see that many of the recommendations offered by Obama's own Surveillance Review Group were either neglected or specifically rejected. While the unconstitutional permanent gag orders attached to National Security Letters will be time-limited, they will continue to be issued by FBI agents, not judges, for sensitive financial and communications records. Nor did the president address NSA's myopic efforts to degrade the security of the Internet by compromising the encryption systems relied on by millions of innocent users.

Sanchez [ends](#) by saying that "**Congress must now act** to cement these reforms in legislation--and to extend them--to ensure safeguards implemented by one president cannot be secretly undone by another."