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## Latest Snowden leak - Microsoft, Skype, others enthusiastically sharing your information with NSA

By Catholic Online (NEWS CONSORTIUM)

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Edward Snowden has provided documents to the media that reveal Microsoft and other internet firms that professed dedication to protecting privacy, were among the greatest collaborators with the NSA.

LOS ANGELES, CA (Catholic Online) - The scale of cooperation between Silicon Valley and the NSA is truly stupendous. According to documents released by the Guardian, Microsoft was very keen to cooperate with the NSA.

The Guardian explained that Microsoft went so far as to:

- Microsoft helped the NSA to circumvent its encryption to address concerns that the agency would be unable to intercept web chats on the new Outlook.com portal;
- The agency already had pre-encryption stage access to email on Outlook.com, including Hotmail;
- The company worked with the FBI this year to allow the NSA easier access via Prism to its cloud storage service SkyDrive, which now has more than 250 million users worldwide;
- Microsoft also worked with the FBI's Data Intercept Unit to "understand" potential issues with a feature in Outlook.com that allows users to create email aliases;
- In July last year, nine months after Microsoft bought Skype, the NSA boasted that a new capability had tripled the amount of Skype video calls being collected through Prism;
- Material collected through Prism is routinely shared with the FBI and CIA, with one NSA document describing the program as a "team sport".

Ironically, it's the same private tech firms that are lobbying the Obama administration for permission to disclose more information to the public about their relationship with government surveillance operators. Firms such as Microsoft claim that they only provide information that is specifically mandated by the government.

Those mandates are supposed to take the form of a warrant, and must always do so any time an American citizen is involved.

However, the NSA surveillance program is permitted to harvest domestic intelligence data if an operator believes there is a 51 percent chance or better that one or more of the communicating parties is located outside of the United States.

Documents reveal that operators routinely perform surveillance on Americans, and have the ability to go so far as to wiretap the Oval Office itself.

It has also been noted previously, that a secret court grants these warrants, and that they very rarely reject any request for warrants, even when the warrant is for a person on American soil.

Despite the public's spin by Microsoft and others, Snowden has claimed that the relationship between Silicon Valley and the NSA is "deep and ongoing." In other words, the level of collaboration between tech giants and the NSA is far greater than we would like to imagine.

It's easy to understand why. After all, these tech giants are also the ones who fill contracts to build the systems that the NSA and other government agencies use. There is a distinct conflict of interest for these agencies to cooperate as fully as possible with even the slightest request. Of course, publicly it's bad business to be open with the truth.

Perhaps the greatest problem is that the American people still do not understand what is really happening. Government surveillance programs are being conducted in a manner that remains of obscure, and their effects are open to debate. These programs also have long-term implications and provoke Constitutional questions.

The American people deserve an open and honest discussion on these programs, how they operate, and whether or not we are comfortable sacrificing the measure of privacy they require to work. How much freedom, if any, we are willing to sacrifice in exchange for safety should not be decided merely by the president, or some government agency, or even the legislature. Instead, these questions should only be decided by the American people themselves, and this can only be done following open and honest national dialogue.

One thing is clear, it's highly unlikely that there will ever be any openness or honesty from either our government or the private firms to collaborate with them.

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