

NSA Denies Spying on Congress, but...; Sanders Cites Nixon Precedent

January 16th, 2014 • 9:54 AM

The NSA Director, Gen. Keith Alexander, has attempted to re-assure Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) that his agency is not directly spying on Congress. But in a two-page letter dated Jan. 10, Alexander says that he cannot guarantee that Members of Congress have not had information about them collected by NSA as part of its acquisition of "telephone metadata."

"Nothing NSA does can fairly be characterized as 'spying on members of Congress or other American elected officials,'" Alexander wrote in the letter which was released by Sanders's office. In his own statement, Sanders pointed out that the NSA "did not rule out collecting intelligence on members of Congress."

"The NSA is collecting enormous amounts of information," Sanders's statement continued. "They know about the phone calls made by every person in this country, where they're calling, who they're calling and how long they're on the phone. Let us not forget that a mere 40 years ago we had a President of the United States who completely disregarded the law in an effort to destroy his political opponents. In my view, the information collected by the NSA has the potential to give an unscrupulous administration enormous power over elected officials."

Sanders called the NSA surveillance program "a clear violation of the Fourth Amendment ban on unreasonable searches," and said "strong new limits are needed to protect the privacy and civil liberties of the American people."

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