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NSA chief Alexander must clarify "all the rules" to ease Congressional anxiety

By **Kristen Saldarini**

(CBS News) House representative Justin Amash (R-Mich.) recently proposed an amendment challenging the scope and authority of NSA surveillance programs, prompting a private last-minute meeting in which [NSA Director Keith Alexander](#) urged Republicans and Democrats to reject the bipartisan proposal.

"This blunt approach is not the product of an informed, open or deliberative process," White House press secretary Jay Carney in a statement Tuesday.

The [proposed amendment to the \\$598.3 billion Department of Defense Appropriations Act for 2014](#) stems from information leaked by former NSA employee Edward Snowden about the surveillance program that manages national security risks by collecting metadata stored on personal phones.

"The fact that this amendment might actually pass today is a sign of just how much unease there is on Capitol Hill with the scope of these programs. This vote is really the first effort to limit the power of the NSA since all those details were leaked, and the NSA is working furiously to defeat it," CBS News congressional correspondent Nancy Cordes reported Wednesday from Capitol Hill.

If approved, the measure would limit the NSA to tracking only the specific individuals under investigation, and limit the collection of telephone numbers and the duration of calls.

CBS News' senior correspondent John Miller, a former assistant director at the FBI, insisted the controversial data-mining program has helped the FBI stop terror plots like bombing the New York Stock Exchange Wednesday on "CBS This Morning."

Dutch Ruppersberger, a Democrat from Maryland, told Cordes, "What we're doing in the metadata program is finding a needle in a haystack, and you need the haystack in order to find the needle," referring to Americans' phone data as the haystack.

Miller explained, "In the entire 35,000 that make up the NSA, there are only seven manager positions to even say 'OK' to looking in the haystack."

"And we only do it when we have a foreign terrorist number and we have to ask ourselves... 'Is this bad guy overseas... in touch with one or more people that could be a cell here?'"

"When he adds on all the rules that go with this program, he should allay their anxiety, because there are a lot of rules.

According to Miller, just 22 NSA officials can authorize running an international phone number

against every American phone record.

After establishing a "reasonable, articulable suspicion" that the individual is connected to a nuclear proliferation, terror, or espionage plot, the information is sent to the FBI. The FBI then files a subpoena, warrant, or wiretap before the agency can detain the suspect. Miller explained, that the NSA is therefore "not allowed" to listen to "U.S. persons," within or outside of the U.S.

To Miller, the challenge for Gen. Keith Alexander and NSA officials looking to defeat the amendment, is the "535 members of Congress who -- except for the two small groups who are on the intelligence committees -- only know what they read in the newspapers about that. And that's basically Edward Snowden's narrative...which is 'They've collected this vast amount of information...and they're violating Americans' privacy.'"

The amendment drafted by Amash appears alongside another amendment that cuts funding for the NSA programs. The House plans to vote on Amash's amendment some time today.

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