Arabic   Spanish   Russian   Freevideo   ИНОТВ   РТД   RUPTLY   Mobile apps   RSS

RT   QUESTION MORE.   LIVE

05:08 GMT, Oct 8, 2013

News   USA   Russian politics   Business   Op-Edge   In vision   In motion   Shows   Bulletin board   More

Home / USA /

Where to
watch

Schedule

NSA's vast new Utah data hub suffering from 'meltdowns' - report

Published time: October 08, 2013 04:00   Get short URL

A new National Security Agency (NSA) data center (George Frey / Getty
Images / AFP)

Like 861   Tweet 70   2 points   • Stun
                                                    8

Though the NSA's vast data storage facility in
Utah is now hardly a secret, new information
has surfaced indicating widespread technical
failures delaying its opening, including 10
"meltdowns" within the past 13 months.

The Pentagon's facility, located in Bluffdale, which lies south of Salt Lake
City, is being built to house a gargantuan quantity of data harvested,
presumably, by many of the NSA's surveillance programs now made

Trends
NSA leaks

Tags
Information Technology,
Politics, SciTech, USA

Follow us

public by former intelligence contractor Edward Snowden.

Estimates of the facility's capacity, which is classified, ranges from exabytes or zettabytes, reports the Wall Street Journal. An exabyte being equivalent to 100,000 times the size of printed material held by the Library of Congress, while a zettabyte is 1,000 times that amount.

A new report compiled through project documents and information provided to the WSJ by officials cite a number of electrical surges -- called *"arc fault failures"* -- which over the past 13 months have destroyed hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of equipment, and delayed the facility from going active for a year.

According to one official, such arc fault failures can resemble *"a flash of lightning inside a 2-foot box"* and can melt metal and destroy circuitry.

Speculation as to whether the NSA's facility in Utah is already active has been rampant, and indications are that its equipment is being slowly brought online as it becomes available, rather than in one dramatic on-switch moment.

"We turn each machine on as it is installed, and the facility is ready for that installation to begin," NSA spokeswoman Vanee Vines told the Salt Lake City Tribune in late September.

The $1.5 billion facility is estimated to be not only the NSA's largest data center, but the largest in the world, with some 1 million square feet of space. Engineers have said the center will dwarf even Google's largest data hub.
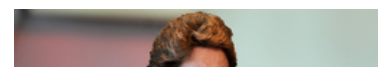
Special teams from the Army Corps of Engineers have been assigned to investigate the electrical issues at the Utah center. The most recent arc failure according to the WSJ seems to have occurred on September 25, causing $100,000 in damage. The first such reported failure is thought to have taken place on August 9 of last year.

So far the information available indicates that the reason for the technical failures remains in dispute. A statement issued by a consortium of private contractors currently working on site eluded to the sheer complexity of the data warehouse as the culprit.

"Problems were discovered with certain parts of the unique and highly complex electrical system. The causes of those problems have been determined and a permanent fix is being implemented," said the firms.

According to various reports, including the latest by the WSJ, the Bluffdale site was chosen by the NSA owing to its affordable electricity. The data hub will consume some 65 megawatts of energy at a cost of $1 million per month.

Beyond its logistical hurdles, the NSA's data hub will also open amidst heightened scrutiny. Lawmakers including Senator Ron Wyden, a member of the Senate Intelligence Committee who recently questioned whether the NSA has also been harvesting geo-location data, have expressed a need to lay out just how the NSA will justify the collection of an increasingly dramatic amount of data.

"There is no question there is going to be increased scrutiny of these kinds of practices," said Wyden, *"because Americans understand this is a dangerous time, but the government, if it's going to collect [this information], ought to have to say here's how it contributes to security of the American people. They have not made that case."*

Only a week prior to Edward Snowden's first batch of published leaks, the massive Utah center had been billed by the agency's Deputy Director, John Inglis, as only one additional working part of the country's national security apparatus.

"They shouldn't be worried because, A, we're Americans," Inglis said. *"We understand what the principles are that govern the nation; [and] B, we take an oath to the Constitution, and we take that very seriously."*

8

Comments (2)

Roy Lynch 08.10.2013 04:58
At first, I found the fact these centers that store illegally

gained data are failing and damaging themselves funny, then I remembered my kids will be paying for it long after I'm gone. I guess it's Karma to the NSA and the citizens that don't care where their taxes go.

Bitty1985 08.10.2013 04:40

how can they build more facilities, when the American people are outraged by these programs?! This should have been placed on hold indefinitely, as their policies are in direct conflict of our constitution. DOWN WITH THE NSA!!!

Add comment

Authorization required for adding comments **RT**