



The NSA: The Global Vacuum Cleaner that Sucks up Everything

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The [New York Times](#) [1] and the [London Guardian](#) [2] carry lengthy and complementary articles, today, on the depth and breadth of NSA spying across the globe, including three newly released documents, which demonstrate that there is no morsel of information too small or too benign for the NSA to be interested in. Both pieces, based on a review of hundreds of documents disclosed by whistleblower Edward Snowden, begin with an account of President Obama's meeting with UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon at the White House, last April, which was described as a cordial meeting during which the two discussed a wide range of topics. However, prior to the meeting, the NSA has succeeded in intercepting Ban's talking points, a feat which the agency, in an internal "brag sheet," described as an "operational highlight." Like nearly everything else the NSA does, the world was not supposed to learn of the operation against Ban as—according to the Guardian—spying on senior UN officials is a violation of international law.

The White House won't say whether or not Obama saw the document before the meeting, but the Times and the Guardian both describe it as "emblematic of an agency that for decades has operated on the principle that any eavesdropping that can be done on a foreign target of any conceivable interest—now or in the future—should be done."

The [Times](#) [1] summary of the two papers' findings says it all, everything else is detail: "From thousands of classified documents, the National Security Agency emerges as an electronic omnivore of staggering capabilities, eavesdropping and hacking its way around the world to strip governments and other targets of their secrets, all the while enforcing the utmost secrecy about its own operations. It spies routinely on friends as well as foes, as has become obvious in recent weeks; the agency's official mission list includes using its surveillance powers to achieve 'diplomatic advantage' over such allies as France and Germany and 'economic advantage' over Japan and Brazil, among other countries." The Guardian adds that the NSA "is indiscriminate in the information it is collecting. Nothing appears to be too small for the NSA. Nothing too trivial. Rivals, enemies, allies and friends—U.S. citizens and 'non-Americans'—are all scooped up."

The NSA doesn't do all this alone, either, but in close collaboration with Britain's GCHQ, through which the NSA is able to "touch" 90 percent of all Internet traffic crossing the UK. The documents describe not only this relationship, but the NSA's relationship with the other three members of the "5 Eyes" grouping of intelligence collaboration—Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, as well as with the larger but less exclusive "9 Eyes," which

adds Denmark, France, Netherlands, and Norway, and the "14 Eyes," which includes Germany, Belgium, Italy, and Spain, and then the "41 Eyes" which adds in the remaining members of the coalition in Afghanistan. The larger the grouping, the more restrictive the sharing is, which grates on some of those excluded from the smaller groups, such as Germany.

William Binney, a former senior NSA official who is now a harsh critic of the agency, tells the Times that as much of a problem as the NSA's spying on friendly foreign leaders has become, the real threat that the agency poses is one of "turnkey totalitarianism," that is, the capability to turn its awesome power on the American public. "I think it's already starting to happen," Binney said. "That's what we have to stop."

The only way to do that, however, is by the prompt Constitutional removal of Obama from office.

Links:

[1] <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/03/world/no-morsel-too-minuscule-for-all-consuming-nsa.html>

[2] <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/nov/02/nsa-portrait-total-surveillance>

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