

U.S. President Won't Apologize for NSA Spying



Washington, January 18 (RHC)-- U.S. President Barack Obama says the United States will not apologize for the National Security Agency's controversial spying programs at home and abroad, but promises modest changes. During a major policy speech on Friday, Obama ordered changes to U.S. intelligence-gathering practices, but the changes fall short of the drastic cutbacks demanded by privacy activists.

The president tried to reassure Americans and foreigners alike that the United States will take into account concerns triggered by disclosures from Edward Snowden, a former NSA and CIA contractor. Obama announced a ban on eavesdropping on leaders of close friends which has ignited a diplomatic firestorm with U.S. allies like Germany.

The U.S. president said that he has ordered a transition period during which the NSA's bulk metadata program will be replaced by a "mechanism that preserves the capabilities we need without the government holding this bulk metadata."

While the speech was designed to address privacy concerns that U.S. surveillance has gone too far, critics say that Obama's measures were limited. Human Rights Watch has sent a letter to Obama, urging him to rein in Washington's spying activities and respect the privacy rights of people around the world.

Earlier this month, Amnesty International also sent an open letter to Obama and urged him to "put human rights at the center of U.S. policy" when introducing reforms to the NSA's spying programs.

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