

Leaked Documents Show U.S. President Secretly Expanded NSA Spying in 2012



Washington, June 5 (RHC)-- Two newly-leaked documents suggest that in 2012 the Barack Obama administration empowered the National Security Agency, the NSA, to expand its web surveillance on Americans without any warrant. Documents show that U.S. Justice Department lawyers wrote two secret memos in mid-2012, giving a green light to the National Security Agency (NSA) to begin monitoring Internet traffic, without securing warrants, anywhere on U.S. soil.

The Justice Department tied these new permissions to those previously granted to the White House, allowing it to use the programs against other countries. As stated in an internal newsletter, at that time the NSA proposed using warrantless surveillance for cyber security purposes. The agency then received approval from the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court.

It is also indicated in these documents that data linked to any intrusions originating abroad, including data destined to suspicious addresses can be traced as well, although the definition of suspicious remains open for speculation.

The documents, leaked to the New York Times and ProPublica on Thursday, note that the surveillance which began in 2012, has actually been going on without issuing individual warrants required under the 1978 Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act. It is also stated in the memos that the warrantless surveillance has already been legalized since 2008.

The new disclosures are leaked by Edward Snowden, a former NSA contractor, who first blew the whistle on large-scale NSA surveillance that intelligence agencies have been conducting against Americans for years. The leaks come amid heated debates over whether the intelligence agencies are even allowed to have such authority to go deep into people's privacy, let alone expanding such activities.

A bid to expand such rights under the USA Freedom Act was only partially approved a few days ago, when the US Senate decided to allow NSA and other American agencies to keep on with modified versions of their data collection programs.

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