



Written by [Steven J. DuBord](#) on June 23, 2009

Iran's Internet Spy Tech Suppliers

The sale of the network “monitoring center” was part of a larger deal that included mobile phone technology; the deal was made by Nokia Siemens Networks, a joint venture of Siemens, a German company, and Nokia, a Finnish cellphone company. Nokia Siemens Networks own literature described the monitoring center as allowing “the monitoring and interception of all types of voice and data communication on all networks.”



The deal for the surveillance equipment was conducted last year by a portion of Nokia Siemens Networks that specialized in “intelligence solutions.” In March of this year, Nokia Siemens Networks sold off this portion of their business to Perusa Partners Fund 1 LP, a Munich-based investment firm, perhaps partly in anticipation of the negative publicity that the current revelations are bound to generate.

Technology experts are saying that Iran's government is going beyond blocking access to certain websites or restricting Internet access. The regime in power is carrying out “deep packet inspection,” which is basically intercepting all packets of data being sent over communications networks, quickly inspecting them for key words, choosing whether or not to alter the communication in some way, and then sending it on to its destination. Though it is not known for certain that the monitoring center is being used for deep packet inspection, the capability is there.

The interception, analysis, alteration, and transmission of so much data simultaneously requires considerable computing horsepower to avoid drastically slowing down the network. The *Journal* notes that “the infiltration of Iranian online traffic could explain why the government has allowed the Internet to continue to function — and also why it has been running at such slow speeds in the days since the results of the presidential vote spurred unrest.” Iranian Internet users have reported speeds as slow as one-tenth of the normal rate.

One of the experts quoted by the *Journal* is Bradley Anstis, director of technical strategy with Marshal8e6 Inc., an Internet security company in Orange, California. He describes Iran's efforts as “drilling into what the population is trying to say,” and says that this is going “a step beyond what any other country is doing, including China.” The difference, as the *Journal* points out, can be simplified to one of scale: “China has about 300 million Internet users, the most of any country. Iran, which has an estimated 23 million users, can track all online communication through a single location called the Telecommunication Infrastructure Co., part of the government's telecom monopoly. All of the country's international links run through the company.”



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Thus, what China must do to maintain its “Great Firewall” is to coerce all Internet service providers to participate in any deep packet inspection efforts the government want to engage in. Iran’s government has the luxury of a monopoly to give it one central location through which it can monitor all online communications. Though Iran’s surveillance may be affecting Internet speeds more than China’s decentralized system, the totalitarian regime in power undoubtedly considers this a small price to pay for such vast power over its citizens.

Let this be a lesson for Western powers who deal with regimes such as those in China and Iran: any sale of such technology will only end up being used to solidify the position of those in power. And let Americans who favor government monopolies or government surveillance of innocent citizens know just how easy it is to abuse such a concentration of power.



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