



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on July 1, 2013

New Revelations About NSA Spying Abroad Enrage European Officials

Saturday's [revelations](#) by the German newspaper *Der Spiegel* that U.S. agents placed bugs in European Union officials' offices in New York and Washington and hacked into EU headquarters in Brussels have [ignited a firestorm](#) of indignation among German and European officials. Coming on the heels of the [FISA court's ruling in April](#) that Verizon must turn over telephone records to the National Security Agency and Edward Snowden's [exposure in June of PRISM, which](#) has been vacuuming up American citizens' Internet communications for years, expressions of outrage were heard from German and European Union politicians. Martin Schulz, head of the European Parliament, declared: "On behalf of the European Parliament I demand full clarification and require further information speedily from US authorities with regard to these allegations."



Luxembourg Foreign Minister Jean Asselborn said: "If these reports are true, it's disgusting. The United States would be better off monitoring its [own] secret services than [those of] its allies. Sabine Leutheusser-Schnarrenberger, Germany's minister of justice, [said](#) such spying was "reminiscent of the methods of foes during the cold war," [adding](#):

It defies all belief that our friends in the US see Europeans as enemies. If EU offices in Brussels and Washington were indeed monitored by US intelligence services, that can hardly be explained with the argument of fighting terrorism.

There has to be an immediate and comprehensive explanation from the US as to whether media reports about completely unacceptable surveillance measures of the US in the EU are true or not.

Comprehensive spying on Europeans by Americans cannot be allowed.

A document partially revealed by *Der Spiegel* indicates that the National Security Agency (NSA) monitors half a billion phone calls, e-mails, and text messages in Germany every month, reminding those who lived in East Germany of [tactics used by the Stasi secret police](#), along with older memories of Hitler's Nazi regime.

Elmar Brok, chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee in the European Parliament, also appeared to be outraged:

The spying has reached dimensions that I didn't think were possible for a democratic country. Such behavior among allies is intolerable. [The United States] is suffering from a security syndrome.



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They have completely lost all balance. George Orwell is nothing by comparison.

The official position taken by the United States is that the fight against terrorism justifies all manner of surveillance, as long as it isn't unlimited. President Obama denied that the NSA was just "rifling" through the e-mails of ordinary European citizens because it is a "circumscribed" system, and that it has averted various terrorist threats already. And former NSA director Mike Hayden pushed back by [saying on Sunday](#) on the CBS show *Face the Nation* that Europeans "should look first and find out what their own governments are doing." Officially, the NSA stated: "As a matter of policy, we have made clear that the United States gathers foreign intelligence of the type gathered by all nations."

The *Guardian* noted in its reporting of the PRISM surveillance project that the NSA has been collecting global electronic information through [Boundless Informant](#), which has for years been collating data collected worldwide from 504 separate collection sources, while the British equivalent of NSA, the Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ), [has been equally active](#) in intercepting and storing mass quantities of fiber-optic traffic through its program [Tempora](#).

In addition, over the past four years, the NSA has hacked into several Chinese mobile-phone companies' databases, the Chinese University of Hong Kong and Tsinghua University in Beijing, and the Asian fiber-optic network operator Pacnet. Where were all the expressions of outrage while that was going on?

As noted [in the Washington Post on June 21](#),

The intelligence community has a history of overreaching in the name of national security. In the mid-1970s, it came to light that, since the 1940s, the NSA had been collecting international telegraphic traffic from companies, in the process obtaining millions of Americans' telegrams that were unrelated to foreign targets.

From 1940 to 1973, the CIA and the FBI engaged in covert mail-opening programs that violated laws prohibiting the interception or opening of mail. The agencies also conducted warrantless "surreptitious entries," breaking into targets' offices and homes to photocopy or steal business records and personal documents.

The Army Security Agency intercepted domestic radio communications. And the Army's CONUS program placed more than 100,000 people under surveillance, including lawmakers and civil rights leaders.

In light of the extensive surveillance of citizens around the world that has been taking place for decades, it's hard to sympathize with these declamations by politicians who say they are just now becoming aware of such activities. Even the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* are johnny-come-latelys when it comes to constitutional infringements. Back in June the *Post* decried these invasions of privacy, saying that "they violate the Fourth Amendment's guarantee against unreasonable search and seizure." The paper added,

As a constitutional matter, the Supreme Court has long held that, where an individual has a reasonable expectation of privacy, search and seizure may occur only once the government has obtained a warrant, supported by probable cause and issued by a judge. The warrant must specify the places to be searched and items to be seized.

The *New York Times* [was equally disingenuous](#) when it called NSA's tactics "criminal," noting, These surveillance programs violate both the letter and the spirit of federal law. No statute explicitly authorizes mass surveillance. Through a series of legal contortions, the Obama



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administration has argued that Congress, since 9/11, intended to implicitly authorize mass surveillance. But this strategy mostly consists of wordplay, fear-mongering and a highly selective reading of the law....

The Fourth Amendment obliges the government to demonstrate probable cause before conducting invasive surveillance. There is simply no precedent under the Constitution for the government's seizing such vast amounts of revealing data on innocent Americans' communications.

Again, where were these defenders of freedom when the surveillance state was being built back in the 1970s? Where were these protestations of outrage while that was going on?

A graduate of Cornell University and a former investment advisor, Bob is a regular contributor to The New American magazine and blogs frequently at www.LightFromTheRight.com, primarily on economics and politics. He can be reached at badelman@thenewamerican.com



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