



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on July 10, 2013

Latin American Nations Upset Over NSA Spying, U.S. Interference

The Rio de Janeiro, Brazil-based newspaper *O Globo* reported on July 9 that former NSA contractor and whistleblower Edward Snowden had provided it with documents showing that the United States has been accumulating data on telephone calls and e-mails from several countries in Latin America, including Brazil, Colombia, and Mexico.



Citing the report in *O Globo*, the *Washington Post* [reported](#) that the NSA had collected military and security data “on countries such as Venezuela, an American adversary that has been accused of aiding Colombia’s Marxist rebels and maintaining close ties with Iran.”

While spying on a leftist regime such as Venezuela’s might be understandable, the documents show that the NSA carried out surveillance operations to discover inside information related to the oil and energy industries not only in Venezuela, but also in Mexico.

The *Post* quoted a statement from U.S. officials in Bogota, Colombia, whose statement on the assertions printed in *O Globo* was: “We have been clear that the United States does gather foreign intelligence of the type gathered by all nations.”

Brazil’s Communications Minister Paulo Bernardo told reporters in Brasilia that Thomas Shannon, the U.S. ambassador to Brazil, denied in a meeting that the United States carries out surveillance operations on Brazilian communications and told him that the United States is not working with Brazilian telecommunications operators, reported the *Post*.

The Guardian (U.K.) also cited Bernardo’s opinion that the NSA data gathering was likely to have been done by satellite or by tapping undersea cables, but he also wanted to determine whether domestic international providers were involved.

“If that has happened, these companies broke Brazilian law and acted against our constitution, which safeguards the right to privacy,” said Bernardo.

Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff told reporters on Monday that her government would raise the issues with the UN Commission on Human Rights, asserting, “Brazil’s position on this issue is very clear and very firm. We do not agree at all with interference of this kind, not just in Brazil but in any other country.”

[O Globo](#) reported that the most intense NSA surveillance was directed at Colombia, Venezuela, Brazil, and Mexico.

Other Latin American nations spied on by the NSA were Argentina, Ecuador, Panama, Costa Rica,



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Nicaragua, Honduras, Paraguay, Chile, Peru, and El Salvador, noted the report.

Peru's President Ollanta Humala said in a televised interview on Tuesday that the alleged spying was worrisome, [reported Reuters](#).

"We are against these kinds of espionage activities," declared Humala. "It would be good for [Peru's] Congress to look with concern at privacy issues related to personal information."

Reuters noted that the *O Globo* article was written by Glenn Greenwald, Roberto Kaz, and José Casado. If Greenwald's name sounds familiar, it is because he is the reporter for *The Guardian* who worked extensively with Edward Snowden. *The Guardian* published a series of exposés based on Snowden's disclosures in June 2013.

When Greenwald asked Snowden in an interview what the leaked documents reveal, the whistleblower replied:

That the NSA routinely lies in response to congressional inquiries about the scope of surveillance in America. I believe that when [Senator Ron] Wyden and [Senator Mark] Udall asked about the scale of this, they [the NSA] said it did not have the tools to provide an answer. We do have the tools and I have maps showing where people have been scrutinized.

When Greenwald asked Snowden why he decided to become a whistleblower, he replied:

The NSA has built an infrastructure that allows it to intercept almost everything. With this capability, the vast majority of human communications are automatically ingested without targeting. If I wanted to see your emails or your wife's phone, all I have to do is use intercepts. I can get your emails, passwords, phone records, credit cards.

I don't want to live in a society that does these sort of things.... I do not want to live in a world where everything I do and say is recorded. That is not something I am willing to support or live under.

Greenwald, who is a U.S. citizen, lives in Rio de Janeiro.

O Globo reported on Sunday that not only the NSA but also the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) had gathered telephone and e-mail data in Brazil, basing its allegations on documents Snowden provided to Greenwald. The two agencies jointly ran monitoring stations to gather information from foreign satellites in 65 countries, including five in Latin America, said the report.

[The Guardian](#) reported that Brazilian Foreign Minister Antonio Patriota expressed "deep concern" about the report appearing in *O Globo*, stating, "The Brazilian government has asked for clarifications through the U.S. embassy in Brasília and the Brazilian embassy in Washington." Patriota said that Brazil would ask the UN to work on an international regulation "to impede abuses and protect the privacy" of Internet users.

Greenwald, writing in his blog, noted that Brazil was merely one example of the NSA's global practice. He observed,

There are many more populations of non-adversarial countries which have been subjected to the same type of mass surveillance net by the NSA: indeed, the list of those which haven't been are [sic] shorter than those which have.

Snowden has revealed that the NSA and CIA used programs called "PRISM" and "Boundless Informant" in Latin America.



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As we noted in our recent article “South American Leaders Protest Rerouting of Bolivian Plane,” many in Latin America are already disenchanted by what they see as heavy-handed interference in their affairs by their neighbor to the north.

Photo of protesters in Mexico condemning the rerouting of Morales’ plane: AP Images

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