

122 World Leaders on NSA Target List

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Theme: [Intelligence](#)

Global Research, March 31, 2014

intelNews.org 31 March 2014

A list of high-priority intelligence targets published over the weekend includes the names of over a hundred current and former heads of state, who were systematically targeted by the United States National Security Agency (NSA). The list appears to be part of a wider “Target Knowledge Base” assembled by the NSA in order to help produce “complete profiles” of what the NSA calls “high-priority intelligence targets”.

The list is contained in a classified top-secret briefing created by the NSA in 2009. It was [published](#) by German newsmagazine *Der Spiegel*, which said it acquired it from American intelligence defector Edward Snowden. Snowden, a former computer expert for the NSA and the Central Intelligence Agency, is currently living in Russia, where he has been offered political asylum.

The leaked briefing explains the function of an extensive NSA signals intelligence (SIGINT) collection program codenamed NYMROD. The computer-based program is allegedly able to sift through millions of SIGINT reports and collate information on individual targets from the transcripts of intercepted telephone calls, faxes, as well as computer data.

[The list](#) provided to *Der Spiegel* by Snowden contains 122 names of international political figures, said the newsmagazine, adding that all of them were “heads of foreign governments”. It includes the name of German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Syrian president Bashar al-Assad, Ukraine’s Yulia Tymoshenko, as well as Belarussian strongman Alexander Lukashenko. Colombia’s former President, Alvaro Uribe, and Malaysia’s Prime Minister from 2003 to 2009, Abdullah bin Haji Ahmad Badawi, also figure on the list.

Interestingly, the leaders of Malaysia, Somalia, the Palestinian Authority and Peru top the NSA’s list of high-value executive targets. It is worth noting that, according to the leaked presentation, intelligence collated through NYMROD is shared by the NSA with its sister agencies in the so-called five-eyes alliance, which consists of SIGINT agencies in the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

In a [separate article](#) published Saturday, *Der Spiegel* said that the NSA collaborated with its British equivalent, the General Communications Headquarters, in order to compromise the networks of private telecommunications firms who provided service to individuals included in the NYMROD high-value target database. The newsmagazine said a 26-page document in its possession “explicitly names” three German telecommunications providers, Stellar, Cetel and IABG.

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