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The War on Your Mind: A Brief History of the U.S. Surveillance-Intelligence Complex

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The recent U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit vindicated the contractor-turned--whistleblower, Edward Snowden, by ruling that the National Security Agency's blanket data collection was unlawful and likely unconstitutional.

After Snowden alerted the world, the Obama administration claimed that the dragnet was necessary to catch terrorists, specifically Issa Doreh, Basaaly Saeed Moalin, Ahmed Nasir Taalil Mohamud, and Mohamed Mohamud, who were convicted in 2013 for sending money to a group designated terrorists by the U.S. State Department: Al-Shabaab, the Somali youth wing of the non-terrorist Islamic Courts Union, which the US and Britain overthrew in late-2006. The Ninth Circuit ruled that Obama's assertion was "inconsistent with the contents of the classified record."

In my new book *The War on You*, I look into the history of the U.S.-British intelligence complex and how it is used to try to control your thoughts and behaviors.

The Global Information Grid

In the post-WWII era, the architecture of U.S. surveillance expanded exponentially. Since the 1960s, the Pentagon has been building what it calls the Global Information Grid (GIG), first mentioned in Zbigniew Brzezinski's book, *Between Two Ages*. The GIG is a network of satellites, telephone, telex, fax, and other interceptable software and hardware.

After WWII, the British and American governments signed the still-classified UKUSA Agreement. Under the Agreement, the Pentagon and UK Ministry of Defence established what journalist Peter Goodspeed calls "a massive surveillance system that can capture and study every telephone call, fax and e-mail message sent anywhere in the world." According to Goodspeed: "[E]spionage agents from Canada, the United States, Britain, Australia and New Zealand — backed up by a web of ships, planes and radar and communication interception sites that ring the earth — have established the greatest spy network in history."

One of the largest interception centers is RAF Menwith Hill, Yorkshire, UK. The station hosts 33 large, golf ball-looking spheres full of radars (radomes). As Goodspeed says, Menwith Hill spies on the whole of Europe and parts of western Russia. Another is Canada's Communications Security Establishment, which spies on North America and eastern Russia. Another was discovered in Israel, which spies on the Middle East and Central Asia. Goodspeed notes that the Australian system "hunts for communications originating in Indochina, Indonesia and southern China. New Zealand sweeps the western Pacific."

Britain's Role

The Menwith Hill station was set up in 1956 by the U.S. Army Security Agency. By the year 1992, it was intercepting two million communications per hour, mainly across Europe, Africa, and Russia. The station pioneered the use of IBM computers in the early-1960s. Echelon picks relevant words spoken in telephone calls and alerts agents. It was run via the NSA's Pathway computer system, which apparently used "off-the-shelf" technologies, from Compaq, Digital Equipment Corp., Tandem, and others (see Loring Wirbel's book, *Star Wars*). Jurisdiction was given to the NSA in 1966. The Federation of American Scientists states: "Since then, Menwith Hill has sifted the international messages, telegrams, and telephone calls of citizens, corporations or governments to select information of political, military or economic value."

Journalist Duncan Campbell notes that in 1970s' UK, the Post Office installed wideband connections to Menwith Hill and Hunters Stones microwave radio station, as part of the microwave network which carried long-distance telephone calls during the 1970s and '80s. Also in the '70s, the NSA inserted de-encryption devices into Switzerland's Crypto AG software, enabling the Agency to decode the traffic of 130 countries.

In 1992, says the Federation of American Scientists, British Telecom installed digital fiber optic cables. By 1996, the cables were able to carry over 100,000 simultaneous telephone calls. In the U.S., the NSA's Operation Shamrock produced similar results. By the 1970s, the magnetic tapes recording all telegraphic communications allowed the NSA to analyze 150,000 messages per month. In August 1975, then-Director of the National Security Agency, Lt. Gen. Lew Allen, admitted to the Congressional Pike Committee that the "NSA systematically intercepts international communications, both voice and cable."

Canada's Role

In the year 2000, *60 Minutes* reported: "If you made a phone call today or sent an e-mail to a friend, there's a good chance what you said or wrote was captured and screened by the [NSA]." It also noted that "Echelon's computers capture virtually every electronic conversation around the world … [V]irtually every signal radiated across the electromagnetic spectrum is being collected and analyzed." Mike Frost, a former spy with the Canadian services, says: "Echelon covers … the entire planet … [E]verything that's radiated worldwide at any given instant … Baby monitors give you a lot of intelligence."

All phone calls are listened to. Frost gives the example of a woman who told her friend that her son's theater performance "bombed." The word "bombed" was in the NSA's Dictionary and triggered a computer response for officers to listen to the conversation. However, in order to know that the woman was talking about her son's play, as opposed to an actual bombing, the NSA must have been recording *everything* she was saying to able to play it back to agents to get the context of the conversation. "The captured signals" of every broadcast made "are then processed through a series of supercomputers, known as dictionaries, that are programmed to search each communication for targeted addresses, words, phrases or even individual voices," says Goodspeed.

These ground-based systems were (and are) not only linked to the hundreds of satellites orbiting the Earth, they connect to mapping and profiling software. The U.S. Space Command calls this "full spectrum dominance."

Conclusion

The blanket surveillance is bad enough for domestic social control and international industrial espionage. But even worse is the use of “full spectrum dominance” for murder. As we’ve seen with cases like the drone up- and down-links at the Ramstein Air Base in Germany, the U.S. Global Information Grid is used to murder the world’s poorest people in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and elsewhere.

Satellites, GPS, and the internet itself were designed in the military sector in the previous decades and transferred to private corporations for profit, creating “dual-use’ technology. But so are the NSA’s Echelon, voice-recognition, and data point-collection software. These technologies are today incorporated into banking, insurance, social media, and marketing in what Professor Shoshana Zuboff conceptualizes as “surveillance capitalism.” These are some of the weapons in the war on you.

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