

NSA Asked Japan to Spy on China: “Wiretapping Phone and Internet Data across Asia-Pacific”

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NSA asked Japan to tap regionwide fiber-optic cables in 2011

The U.S. National Security Agency sought the Japanese government’s cooperation in 2011 over wiretapping fiber-optic cables carrying phone and Internet data across the Asia-Pacific region, but the request was rejected, sources said Saturday.

The agency’s overture was apparently aimed at gathering information on China given that Japan is at the heart of optical cables that connect various parts of the region. But Tokyo turned down the proposal, citing legal restrictions and a shortage of personnel, the sources said.

The NSA asked Tokyo if it could intercept personal information from communication data passing through Japan via cables connecting it, China and other regional areas, including Internet activity and phone calls, they said.

Faced with China’s growing presence in the cyberworld and the need to bolster information about international terrorists, the United States may have been looking into whether Japan, its top regional ally, could offer help similar to that provided by Britain, according to the sources.

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