

NSA Tapping Internet Backbone, Spying On Our Social Networks

By [Washington's Blog](#)

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New NSA Spying Revelations

Senator Diane Feinstein unintentionally confirmed that the NSA is tapping into the Internet's very *backbone*:

Upstream collection... occurs when NSA obtains internet communications, such as e-mails, from certain US companies that operate the Internet background [she meant "backbone"], i.e., the companies that own and operate the domestic telecommunications lines over which internet traffic flows.

Security expert Bruce Schneier [writes](#):

We [know](#) from the Snowden documents ([and other sources](#)) that the NSA taps Internet backbone through secret-agreements with major U.S. telcos., but the U.S. government still hasn't admitted it.

In late August, the Obama administration declassified a [ruling](#) from the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court. Footnote 3 reads:

The term 'upstream collection' refers to NSA's interception of Internet communications as they transit [LONG REDACTED CLAUSE], [REDACTED], rather than to acquisitions directly from Internet service providers such as [LIST OF REDACTED THINGS, PRESUMABLY THE PRISM DOWNSTREAM COMPANIES].

Here's [one analysis](#) of the document.

[Feinstein admitted this today.]

Note that we [knew this](#) in 2006:

One thing the NSA wanted was access to the growing fraction of global telecommunications that passed through junctions on U.S. territory. According to former senator Bob Graham (D-Fla.), who chaired the Intelligence Committee at the time, briefers told him in Cheney's office in October 2002 that Bush had authorized the

agency to tap into those junctions. That decision, Graham said in an interview first reported in The Washington Post on Dec. 18, allowed the NSA to intercept “conversations that . . . went through a transit facility inside the United States.”

And [this](#) in 2007:

[The Program] requires the NSA, as noted by Rep. Peter Hoekstra, “to steal light off of different cables” in order to acquire the “information that’s most important to us” Interview with Rep. Peter Hoekstra by Paul Gigot, Lack of Intelligence: Congress Dawdles on Terrorist Wiretapping, JOURNAL EDITORIAL REPORT, FOX NEWS CHANNEL (Aug. 6, 2007) at 2.

So we knew it already, but now we know it even more. So why won’t President Obama [admit it](#)?

In related news, the New York Times reports that the NSA is constructing [sophisticated graphs of our social media connections](#):

Since 2010, the National Security Agency has been exploiting its huge collections of data to create sophisticated graphs of some Americans’ social connections that can identify their associates, their locations at certain times, their traveling companions and other personal information, according to newly disclosed documents and interviews with officials.

Business Insider [notes](#):

The agency could augment the communications data with material from public, commercial and other sources, including bank codes, insurance information, Facebook profiles, passenger manifests, voter registration rolls and GPS location information, as well as property records and unspecified tax data, according to the documents, the paper said.

Like we’ve said for months, the NSA is [spying on everything](#). (And [see this](#).)

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