

The NSA's Greatest Hits: "We're the Only Ones Not Spying on the American people"

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The title of this piece comes from a statement by the NSA director on spying right before the recent stories on mass surveillance broke.

The hero of the day, 29 year-old Edward Snowden, an NSA contractor, revealed himself in an interview [with The Guardian](#): "after several days of interviews [we are]...revealing his identity at his request..." "I have no intention of hiding who I am because I know I have done nothing wrong," he said.

Snowden will go down in history as one of America's most consequential whistleblowers, alongside Daniel Ellsberg and Bradley Manning." In an interview done by Glenn Greenwald, in Hong Kong, Snowden [spoke of this](#) and more, along with warning people of the current problems with the massive surveillance state.

The current American empire, with state capitalism, is not simply a police state, a surveillance state but is rather a national security state with mass surveillance and police repression. Maybe this is why Ralph Nader recently said America fascism, using FDR's definition he said in April 1938:

"The first truth is that the liberty of a democracy is not safe if the people tolerate the growth of private power to a point where it becomes stronger than their democratic state itself. That, in its essence, is fascism — ownership of government by an individual, by a group, or by any other controlling private power."

More frighteningly, we have approached the world George Orwell wrote about in 1984 or mass surveillance as envisioned in the movie, The Truman Show. Recently numerous scandals have opened up the surveillance state of America and put it up for show. This is something whistleblowers [have been warning us about](#) for years! Still, some defend it, like a comment on a New York Times that says they are supposedly for civil liberties, but asks "why do people care so much if the government knows whom they call, how long they speak, and from where" and they don't care "if the government has my phone records." This article tries to answer these concerns. Maybe they'd think differently if they guessed that the [DOJ was wiretapping](#) the cloakroom of the House of Representatives, that the NSA [tried to wiretap](#) an unknown member of Congress or [like Julian Assange](#) they said that "Facebook is a spying machine" that does free work for the intelligence community. All of these concerns have been amplified recently.

In the past week there have a number of recent revelations about the current surveillance

state in the United States which were in part [confirmed](#) by the Director of National Intelligence, James Clapper. Even the New York Times recently said that that such revelations show that the Obama administration has “lost all credibility” while even right-wing publications [like Human Events](#) and [Commentary](#), a neo-conmagazine had their share of criticism. First was the revelation of the secret order compelling Verizon to hand over their phone records. Blogtivist Glenn Greenwald [wrote in The Guardian](#) that

“The National Security Agency is currently collecting the telephone records of millions of US customers of Verizon, one of America’s largest telecoms providers, under a top secret court order issued in April...Under the terms of the blanket order, the numbers of both parties on a call are handed over, as is location data, call duration, unique identifiers, and the time and duration of all calls. The contents of the conversation itself are not covered...The court order expressly bars Verizon from disclosing to the public either the existence of the FBI’s request for its customers’ records, or the court order itself...While the order itself does not include either the contents of messages or the personal information of the subscriber of any particular cell number, its collection would allow the NSA to build easily a comprehensive picture of who any individual contacted, how and when, and possibly from where, retrospectively...It is not known whether Verizon is the only cell-phone provider to be targeted with such an order, although previous reporting has suggested the NSA has collected cell records from all major mobile networks.”

An expert told the Washington Post that this [was a routine renewal](#) of surveillance by the FISA court which many are now calling a “rubber stamp” and a Senator also [confirmed this renewal](#) as well according to Russia Today. Al Gore in his rare criticism called this “obscenely outrageous.” Patrick Duruseau wrote in a guest post for Naked Capitalism that this program [could be a kickback](#) for Verizon campaign contributions to the Obama machine. Before this was revealed, an article was published in The Verge [noting that](#) the “sweeping surveillance campaign against [AP]... reporters over the course of two months” done by the DOJ had included the collection of “numbers, call durations, location data, and other telecommunications byproducts — not the content of the communications themselves” just like the secret order compelling Verizon to hand over the data which in their view is in part thanks to a “weak privacy law that keeps allowing the US government to capture data en masse without any warrants or legal repercussions: the Electronic Communications Privacy Act (ECPA) of 1986.”

High profile senators like Dianne Feinstein and Lindsey Graham who declared “the world is a battlefield” defended the program among others. Then, there was another revelation. The NSA had set up a program called PRISM to collect data from tech giants, as the [slides posted](#) on the Washington Post show, and an article about how Google, Facebook, Microsoft, Yahoo, Skype, YouTube, and Apple are [all participating](#) in top secret spying program. Once again this [was posted on The Guardian](#) by Greenwald and Ewen MacAskill which noted that while the internet giants denied it, the NSA had

“obtained direct access to the systems of Google, Facebook, Apple and other US internet giants...[which is] part of a previously undisclosed program called Prism, which allows officials to collect material including search history, the content of emails, file transfers and live chats...[supposedly] run with the assistance of the companies...[and] was enabled by changes to US surveillance law...renewed under Obama in December 2012...The program facilitates extensive, in-depth surveillance on live communications and stored information. The law allows for the targeting of any customers of participating

firms who live outside the US, or those Americans whose communications include people outside the US.”

The story continues noting that companies like Microsoft, Yahoo, Google, Facebook, PalTalk, YouTube, Skype, AOL and Apple participated in this program which allows the gathering of data including “email, video and voice chat, videos, photos, voice-over-IP (Skype, for example) chats, file transfers, social networking details, and more, all of which was allowed thanks to the FISA Amendments Act and there has been over 24,000 requests in 2012. Its even possible that the secure Dropbox [will be next](#) on the list. At the same time, the Obama administration [says this is justified](#) by trying to fight terrorism, the Washington Post said this program is part of “blanket surveillance” [for up to a year](#) at a time, it [seems highly likely](#) that Microsoft acquired Skype to bring it into PRISM (maybe even acquiring Xbox for the same reason), the DNI [issued a report of “facts”](#) denying what The Guardian wrote, making it seem like it is only aimed at foreign targets and a person wrote in The Atlantic that [they were not sure why](#) the program was classified to begin with.

One June 8th, another article came out by Greenwald and Ewen MacAskill noting another top-secret document had been revealed. They [wrote that](#)

“the National Security Agency has developed a powerful tool for recording and analysing where its intelligence comes from...called Boundless Informant, that details and even maps by country the voluminous amount of information it collects from computer and telephone networks. The focus of the internal NSA tool is on counting and categorizing the records of communications, known as metadata, rather than the content of an email or instant message. The Boundless Informant documents show the agency collecting almost 3 billion pieces of intelligence from US computer networks over a 30-day period ending in March 2013...[a] heat map reveals how much data is being collected from around the world...Iran was the country where the largest amount of intelligence was gathered...followed by...Pakistan. Jordan...Egypt...and India...The heatmap gives each nation a color code based on how extensively it is subjected to NSA surveillance...Other documents seen by the Guardian further demonstrate that the NSA does in fact break down its surveillance intercepts which could allow the agency to determine how many of them are from the US. The level of detail includes individual IP addresses. IP address is not a perfect proxy for someone’s physical location but it is rather close...The documents show that the team responsible for Boundless Informant assured its bosses that the tool is on track for upgrades.”

One wonders if this is any surprise considering previous revelations. As it turns out, no one should be outraged. Definitely they should be outraged but as Greenwald and a number of other writers noted on June 6th, the NSA was in secret for two decades after its establishment and [they also said](#):

“When Harry Truman set up the NSA, it was exclusively aimed at monitoring communications abroad. The question that had exercised politicians and civil rights organisations since the Senate unveiled it in 1975 is to what extent its ferocious appetite for data has encompassed American citizens. General Lou Allen, the first NSA chief to appear in public, told Congress in the mid-1970s that the agency maintained lists of hundreds of names, including US citizens under surveillance for anti-war dissent or suspicious foreign connections...Domestic snooping exploded in scale after 9/11, when George W Bush authorised the agency to eavesdrop on Americans without the previous

requirement for warrants...With every passing administration, the NSA has ballooned...While the NSA is by far the biggest surveillance agency in the world, it shares some of its work with four other allies: Britain, Australia, New Zealand and Canada. Collectively, they are known as the “five eyes”. Of the five, the biggest after the NSA is Britain’s General Communications Headquarters (GCHQ)...It was a Democratic senator and lawyer, Frank Church, who in 1975 first raised the alarm at the agency’s sprawling tentacles...The Church Senate hearings led to the 1978 Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (Fisa), which required a warrant to conduct surveillance of communications within the US...In the years since 9/11, as the role of the NSA has snowballed, so has the debate over its operations. In 2005, the New York Times reported that the Bush administration had secretly authorised the NSA to eavesdrop on Americans and others inside the US, to search for terrorist activity without the Fisa court warrants...The massive surveillance programme has continued under the Obama administration, at home as well as abroad. And the culture of intense secrecy persists.”

Maybe this is why intelligence officials [talked about the leaker](#) of the information to The Guardian and The Washington Post, saying they “disappeared” and some are saying this person [will be treated harsher](#) than Bradley Manning! The scary thing is with such wide NSA surveillance, as [David Seaman noted](#) it “allows for govt to blackmail, shame, or discredit any activist or journalist who threatens status quo.”

Think this the only secret dealings of our government? You’d be deeply mistaken. For one, we do know that the NSA does collect information on millions of Americans [despite what James Clapper said](#). William Blum devoted a whole chapter to his book about American Empire, Rogue State: A Guide to the World’s Only Superpower, to eavesdropping. He wrote that

“like a vacuum cleaner in the sky, the National Security Agency (NSA) sucks it all up: fax, home phone, cellular phone, email...voice, text, images...Perhaps billions of messages sucked up each day...Under a system codenamed ECHELON...the NSA and its...junior partners in Britain, Australia, New Zealand and Canada operate a network of massive, highly automated interception stations, covering the globe...the ECHELON system works by indiscriminately intercepting very large quantities of communications...[and] is carried out without official acknowledgment of its existence...In their quest to gain access to more and more private information, the NSA, the FBI and other components of the US national security establishment have been engaged for years in a campaign to require American telecommunications manufacturers and carriers to design their equipment and networks to optimize the authorities’ wiretapping ability...And the FBI is now enjoying its newest Big Brother toy: “roving wiretaps”, which allows the tapping of any phone physically near the targeted subject...the worst possible scenario [includes]...the possibility of blackmail or forcing a person to engage in espionage or treason...[and the] NSA had...install[ed] secret programs in Microsoft software [while]...the Pentagon...was Microsoft’s biggest client in the world.”

Keep in mind this was written in 2000, before the Patriot Act and [the infamous Room 641A](#) which takes in all communications from AT&T. As historycommons.org notes, the NSA repeatedly from 1999 to 2007 [kept trying to access the data of private companies](#) with only Qwest refusing access. That act still includes (the provisions that weren’t struck down or reauthorized): roving wiretaps, the issuing of National Security Letters which allows the US to get data on certain individuals, searches of business records and surveillance of “lone

wolves” or those not part of terrorist groups. One must jump back to the revelations about the Intelligence Community which lead to the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act.

The Church Committee revealed a number of things and foretold about the surveillance state. In Part I of Book II of their final report, titled INTELLIGENCE Activities and the Rights of Americans notes that [notes that](#)

“our investigation has established that the targets of intelligence activity have ranged far beyond persons who could properly be characterized as enemies of freedom and have extended to a wide array of citizens engaging in lawful activity...intelligence activity in the past decades has, all too often, exceeded the restraints on the exercise of governmental power which are imposed by our country’s Constitution, laws, and traditions...Excesses in the name of protecting security are not a recent development in our nation’s history. In 1798, for example, shortly after the Bill of Rights was added to the Constitution, the Alien and Sedition Acts were passed. These Acts, passed in response to fear of proFrench “subversion”, made it a crime to criticize the Government. During the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln suspended the writ of habeas corpus. Hundreds of American citizens were prosecuted for anti-war statements during World War I, and thousands of “radical” aliens were seized for deportation during the 1920 Palmer Raids. During the Second World War, over the opposition of J. Edgar Hoover and military intelligence...120,000 Japanese-Americans were apprehended and incarcerated in detention camps...We have examined the collection of intelligence about the political advocacy and actions and the private lives of American citizens. That information has been used covertly to discredit the ideas advocated and to “neutralize” the actions of their proponents...When a police system passes beyond these limits, it is dangerous to the proper administration of justice and to human liberty, which it should be our first concern to cherish...We have seen segments of our Government, in their attitudes and action, adopt tactics unworthy of a democracy, and occasionally reminiscent of the tactics of totalitarian regimes...United States intelligence agencies have investigated a vast number of American citizens and domestic organizations...Too many people have been spied upon by too many Government agencies and too much information has been collected. The Government has often undertaken the secret surveillance of citizens on the basis of their political beliefs, even when those beliefs posed no threat of violence or illegal acts on behalf of a hostile foreign power. The Government, operating primarily through secret informants, but also using other intrusive techniques such as wiretaps, microphone “bugs” surreptitious mail opening, and break-ins, has swept in vast amounts of information about the personal lives, views, and associations of American citizens...For approximately 20 years the CIA carried out a program of indiscriminately opening citizens’ first class mail...Since the early 1930’s, intelligence agencies have frequently wiretapped and bugged American citizens without the benefit of judicial warrant. Recent court decisions have curtailed the use of these techniques against domestic targets...The overwhelming number of excesses continuing over a prolonged period of time were due in large measure to the fact that the system of checks and balances — created in our Constitution to limit abuse of Governmental power — was seldom applied to the intelligence community.”

Such strong language continues [in Volume 5 of the report](#) devoted to the NSA, the [rest of Book II](#), and sections of [Book III](#). The Pike Committee, headed by Otis G. Pike, whose whole report is almost non-existent from the internet, except on the website of the Mary Ferrell Foundation, notes about this. In one draft report titled Interception of International Telecommunications by the National Security Agency [it notes](#) that the NSA has the “technological capability to intercept a significant portion of worldwide communications”

which Frank Church (who lead the Church Committee) said that it would result in no privacy for the American people. The report continues, noting that the government stopped them from investigating further and how the Church Committee held an open session on the NSA but that people refused to testify, but still the report notes that telcom companies have worked with the Feds [since World War I](#)! The Rockefeller Commission was a bit more mild but still revealed important information. They noted that the CIA kept biographical listings on Americans as [part of an "operations directorate"](#), how the [CIA was involved in Watergate](#) (and other scandals) and [interception of mail](#) by the CIA since the 1950s, [among other aspects](#).

Today, its even worse, and more than what was noted earlier. Already, the NSA is [according to the Wall Street Journal](#) is monitoring "credit card transactions...as part of its [supposed] effort to target possible terrorists."

Don't forget the NSA is [building the country's biggest spy center](#) to store our information. On top of this, the Supreme Court ruled in Maryland v. King that if you are arrested they can put a swab in your mouth to get your DNA, [saying that](#) "DNA identification of arrestees is a reasonable search that can be considered part of a routine booking procedure," an extension of the national security state. On top this, there are reports that Obama Administration officials [are using secret emails](#) according to Firedoglake to avoid FOIA requests! At the same time there "controlled" leaks for PR purposes like the information Leon Panetta [gave to the filmmaker](#) of Zero Dark Thirty, the kill list, the deposition matrix and other ideas. At the same time, groups like Megaupload [are targeted](#) possibly because they help groups like Wikileaks. In 2008, Obama [promised](#) to not do this, even [proposing a bill](#) to stop the warrantless wiretapping but now he has completely reversed himself.

Washington's Blog [wrote recently](#) how

"foreign companies have had key roles scooping up Americans' communications for the NSA" which included content not just metadata but a "breathtakingly wide program of spying...a secret interpretation of Section 215 of the Patriot Act which allows the government to obtain...any information as long as it came from a private company ... foreign or domestic. In other words, the government is using the antiquated, bogus legal argument that it was not using its governmental powers...but that it was private companies just doing their thing...Binney confirmed that this was correct...Binney said that...the government is gathering everything, including content...Binney explained...that the government is storing everything, and creating a searchable database...to be used whenever it wants, for any purpose it wants...Binney said that former FBI counter-terrorism agent Tim Clemente is correct when he [says](#) that no digital data is safe...Binney gave me an idea of how powerful Narus recording systems are. There are probably 18 of them around the country, and they can each record 10 gigabytes of data...Binney next confirmed the statement of the author of the Patriot Act - Congressman Jim Sensenbrenner - that the NSA spying programs [violate the Patriot Act](#)...[later he said] it's clear to me that they are collecting most e-mail in full plus other text type data on the web. As for phone calls, I don't think they would record/transcribe the approximately 3 billion US-to-US calls every day. It's more likely that they are recording and transcribing calls made by the 500,000 to 1,000,000 targets in the US and the world."

This is just the beginning. As another [post by Washington's Blog notes](#),

“the American government is in fact collecting and storing virtually every phone call, purchases, email, text message, internet searches, social media communications, health information, employment history, travel and student records, and virtually all other information of every American...Binney says that if anyone gets on the government’s “enemies list”, then the stored information will be used to target them. Specifically, he notes that if the government decides it doesn’t like someone, it analyzes all of the data it has collected on that person and his or her associates over the last 10 years to build a case against him...In addition, the amount of money and effort the government is putting into spying on Americans using a wide variety of other technologies tends to discredit any notion that the government is exercising restraint in monitoring our phone calls (which are already being tapped) for content. For example, the government is flying drones over the American homeland to spy on us...Cell towers track where your phone is at any moment, and the major cell carriers, including Verizon and AT&T, responded to at least 1.3 million law enforcement requests for cell phone locations and other data in 2011...Your iPhone, or other brand of smartphone is spying on virtually everything you do...Fox news notes that the government is insisting that “black boxes” be installed in cars to track your location. The TSA has moved way past airports, trains and sports stadiums, and is deploying mobile scanners to spy on people all over the place. This means that traveling within the United States is no longer a private affair....the Department of Homeland Security is going to continue to allow searches of laptops and phones based upon “hunches”...Going further down the high tech Big Brother rabbit hole, the FBI wants a backdoor to all software...The CIA wants to spy on you through your dishwasher and other appliances. Verizon has applied for a patent that would allow your television to track what you are doing, who you are with, what objects you’re holding, and what type of mood you’re in. The new Xbox may be able to spy on you as well.”

As a recent article [in the New York Times](#) notes, in March 2013 alone, the NSA collected 97 billion pieces of data from worldwide networks! That is the state of the American national security state which Julian Assange recently said is [part of the collapse](#) of the American justice system.

This is not the only parts of this tyranny in place. As Thomas Drake, an NSA whistleblower has said we are all [“persons of interest”](#). Larry Wilkerson [added to this](#), noting that “so this business of we’ve got to listen to Americans to find out whether or not we’re going to be attacked and we’ve got to listen to them in such intrusive ways that clearly violate our civil liberties I think is a preposterous premise in the first place...What they’re doing is gathering all this so-called metadata, storing it, and then applying algorithms to it, the length and breadth and specifics of which we have no way of knowing, and extracting data when and if the algorithm tells them it needs extracting...they’re storing those phone calls and they might listen to them in the future.

And is there probable cause? Is there reasonable suspicion?.” Additionally, it seems clear that Obama is a liar as [in 2007](#) he said “[Bush] acts like violating civil liberties is the way to enhance our security. It is not.” while today he clearly has become the one he decried. Already, Barrett Brown, supposedly the Anonymous spokesperson [was digging into the surveillance state](#), NSA contractors and the like before he was arrested by the Feds. At the same time, Amnesty International [raised serious questions](#) about “respect for the right to privacy” by the US, there are reports that Congress in a sense legalized the PRISM program [in 2007](#), there was [a crime report filed](#) on the leaks from the NSA, and there is a possibility that PRISM [could be hacked](#) by China! Even in 2006, there was the possibility of NSA warrantless wiretapping, defendants who alledged it [backed off and decided to enter a plea](#)

[deal](#) rather than invalidate the whole prosecution. The EFF [wrote](#) in May 2013 that President Obama “...could formally support reform of the Electronic Communications Privacy Act, which still says law enforcement agencies do not need warrants to obtain emails over 180 days old....could come out in favor of warrant protection for cell-phone location information since it’s requested by authorities [literally millions of times a year](#) without a warrant...[but instead he supports] CALEA II, a dangerous proposal...[that] would force companies like Google and Facebook to install backdoors in all of their products to facilitate law-enforcement access, putting both our privacy and security at risk.” This is on top of [the fact](#) which many occupiers knew: if you engage in a protest your data will be tracked and stored as a “routine practice!”

Continuing to look into surveillance I became more and more mad. Consider that three of the main candidates in the NYC mayoral race (Anthony Weiner, Bloomberg clone Christine Quinn, and Bill de Blasio) [support surveillance on Muslim groups](#) saying they saw nothing wrong (but not good ‘ole Randy Credico)! In the same vein, lawmakers like bigot Peter King called for increased surveillance [of Muslims](#) or in general ([in the ground and in the sky](#)). Anonymous released thirteen documents, which I analyzed on my blog, Interesting Blogger, in what I call [“Defensegate”](#) and don’t need to be described in depth here. All I will say is that this documents show the DOD is involved in spying, that accessing metadata is part of their networks that share information, that they promoting cyberwarfare and more. At the same time, we cannot forget the mass government surveillance of the Occupy Movement by the DHS, FBI, Federal Reserve and local police departments, among others who worked as the de facto police force for the power elite as noted [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#). There are additional reports of corporate entities [spying on environmental groups](#), spying [on anti-war activists](#) (also [here](#), [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#)) and [PETA and Greenpeace](#). There have also been [an investigation](#) by NBC News into Pentagon surveillance of Americans, EPIC [suing the DHS](#) over covert surveillance, spying of Maryland anti-war protesters and opponents of the death penalty according to [the Washington Post](#), [ACLU](#), [Democracy Now!](#), [Truthout](#), [Z Magazine](#), and [Socialist Worker](#). The ACLU [said recently](#) that the NSA has direct access to every corner of Americans’ digital lives. Forbes Magazine wrote in May 2012 an even more startling revelation: the DHS was monitoring social networking sites. The article talked about how they had to release [a list of keywords](#) of what they were monitoring. On top of this, let us not forget the privacy issues with facial recognition which [has spread](#) on a nationwide scale, the NSA call database which pulls in calls from the two biggest telecoms, AT&T and Verizon, the fact that the internet is [a surveillance state](#), the massive amount of surveillance cameras [in Boston](#), the [advancement](#) of “Orwellian surveillance” by the US Senate, the amount of surveillance in Baltimore city (see [here](#) and [here](#)), the drones [“coming to a sky near you”](#) as the FAA [integrates them](#) into the sky after Congress legalized it with some [not even waiting](#) for regulations be put in place and some like Mayor 1%er Bloomberg said that the [drones are Big Brother](#) and that you should get used it! Let us also not forget about: the former [Information Awareness Office](#), the [FISA Amendments Act](#), the [Combined DNA Index System](#), the [Law Enforcement National Data Exchange](#), the [Integrated Automated Fingerprint Identification System](#), Combat Zones that See which the Village Voice [calls Big Brother](#), the [Information Processing Technology Office](#), [Intellipedia](#), [CALEA](#) which has broad reaching affects, [DCSNET](#) from which the FBI can do instant wiretaps on any US telcom device, the [Synthetic Environment for Analysis and Simulations](#) and the [Multistate Anti-Terrorism Information Exchange](#).

If you thought that was bad, consider a program that has cameras in streetlights. What Dead Prez sang in their song, Police State, partly describes this program, especially the last

two lines: "F.B.I. spyin on us through the radio antennas/And them hidden cameras in the streetlight watchin society/With no respect for the people's right to privacy." While that may seem conspiratorial, consider the graphic on [their website](#) which looks really [damn creepy](#). [They wrote](#) that they are a "Detroit-area lighting design and multi-media firm with clients around the world, but did not anticipate the immediate attention this would garner," that their critics learned everything from "the "Big Brother" movies" and that "the Intellistreets system is designed to do is simply make our streets safer, more energy efficient and smarter, while being informative and entertaining...[and] includes the collection and reporting of information immediately and completely so that first responders...can react very quickly in moments of danger...That's why we proudly reached out to the Department of Homeland Security to share our technology...Intellistreets is very much a case of private enterprise, working in the private sector, with private dollars, to help solve the security, energy and financial challenges facing our cities and citizens." Sounds nice, doesn't it?

Consider this article [in Russia Today](#), noting that "in Farmington Hills, Michigan, things just got a whole lot creepier. Officials say the installation of ten new high-tech light posts will curb crime and cut energy costs for the Midwest community. All the townspeople have to do in return is give up their privacy...Simply put, the Intellistreets project is a system of Internet-connected luminaries that communicate with one another across the city. In addition to lighting the area, they can broadcast verbal and written messages, monitor rainfall and give directions...Not only does Intellistreets offer information about the neighborhood and provide light, it also monitors the conversations of pedestrians, records video, monitors foot-traffic and counts heads — all of which is recorded and stored for possible analysis...Detroit, Chicago and Pittsburgh have [also] placed orders...one must be comfortable knowing that their every move and whisper is recorded and monitored by a network of computers between posts that can be controlled by a central hub, iPhone or tablet...As a backlash began to hit Intellistreets, the company removed a YouTube video that offered an eerie insight into the surveillance capabilities...and discusses the system's ability to store and analyze data...At \$3,000 a piece, IntelliStreets luminaries have the potential of lowering energy costs by adjusting brightness to match the appropriate atmosphere and location. Additionally, the company says it has an endless number of entertainment options and can serve as a public address system of sort and offer advertisements up to passersby. That's right — it records video, counts heads and spews propaganda!" As Fox Charlotte [notes](#), "these street lights double as surveillance. They can play music, monitor conversations, direct traffic, send emergency signals, and take pictures." An [article in WXYZ](#), ABC 7, notes that Intellistreet polls "are being used for entertainment and safety. but some critics say this is nothing more than the watchful eye of big brother keeping track of your every moment...LED video screens and cameras add to the wireless infrastructure that is remotely controlled. It can provide entertainment, save energy, make announcements, and even counts people for police. When you step come into view of the street light, there is a camera that spots you, and the person on the other side sees you by white specs on a black screen. The camera senses that somebody is there, and if wants, it can even take your picture. The system is also capable of recording conversations making critics cry invasion of privacy...Basic light starts at \$3,000 dollars. By Spring of next year there is a good chance you could see them pop up in your city."

That's not all. The sarcastic "Fear Department" even has something to say, [noting that](#) they are "excited about a new system that renders street lights capable of spying on the American people and transmitting our messages to them"and they feature the promotional video which is creepy and reminds me of the loadspeakers in V for Vendetta. In an article [in](#)

[Daily Mail](#), they note that “Like something out of a sinister Orwellian vision of the future, streetlights with the ability to monitor conversations and announce government warnings are being installed on American streets. As part of a federally-funded project, manufacturers Illuminating Concepts have begun installing the system, dubbed ‘Intellistreets’ in the town of Farmington Hills, Michigan. According to the company’s video presentation the capabilities of the devices include homeland security, public safety, traffic control, advertising and video surveillance features...Conspiracy theorists and freedom of information campaigners have been quick to suggest the devices amount to a plot by federal government to control communications and eavesdrop on people’s lives. Fears the lampposts are a step towards the creation of a police state were further fueled when the firm removed a promotional video from You Tube, rumoured to be a result of negative publicity about the ‘Homeland Security’ features. Each street light contains a speaker system to broadcast emergency alerts, and a video display and is also equipped with proximity sensors capable of recording both pedestrian and road traffic...In Britain, Middlesbrough council introduced streetlights with speakers attached in 2006 to blast warnings at people indulging in anti-social behaviour. Last month Mail Online revealed that talking bins, which feature celebrity voices thanking people for not dropping litter are being installed in Liverpool and London.” Wired Magazine followed up on this but [praised the program](#), not even talking about the implications for privacy saying it makes the streetlight “intelligent” and is part of “smart cities.” Public Intelligence said that the streetlights [will monitor pedestrians](#) and broadcast government alerts. An article [in the Examiner](#) notes that “the U.S. Department of Energy partially funded technology equips mundane street lights with public safety, homeland security, information and audio. The first high tech light poles are already installed and functioning in Farmington Hills, Michigan where the light poles are manufactured...The energy efficient streetlights, remotely controlled LED or LCD video screens and cameras once manufactured for entertainment only, now can (potentially) count people for the police, record conversations and detect everything from explosives to radiation gas leaks...The fact that environmentally friendly and affordable streetlights with the potential to videotape private conversations, to a shrinking number of American citizens – but still Americans – is still creepy. The technology clearly becomes a 4th amendment violation when the Department of Homeland Security rolls out the fully loaded streetlights on every street corner in America.” The official view is shown by [a report done by the Urban Institute](#) in conjunction with the DOJ: “Public surveillance systems—once referred to as closed-circuit televisions—which have previously been utilized only by private businesses, are now expanding to encompass both private and public sector agencies, giving law enforcement agencies a new tool in their public safety toolbox...While public surveillance systems are widely employed in the business sector to improve security, until recently the use of cameras to monitor public spaces has been much less common in the United States, in part due to concerns about privacy and civil liberties...Public surveillance systems might also yield a secondary impact, serving to increase legitimate users’ perceptions of safety and thus their presence in public areas, which in turn may increase guardianship, improve police-community partnerships, and reduce crime.”

Then there’s fusion centers which were created after 9/11 and only a small part of what journalists Dana Priest and William Arkin call “[Top Secret America](#).” The ACLU [noted that](#) “in November 2007, the American Civil Liberties Union issued its first report on intelligence fusion centers, warning that these rapidly developing multi-jurisdictional spying centers lacked clear guidelines or sufficient oversight, and posed a severe risk to Americans’ civil liberties. By 2012, congressional investigators agreed.” In a story [in Russia Today](#), they noted that “law enforcement intelligence-processing fusion centers have long come under

attack for spying on Americans. The Arkansas director wanted to clarify the truth: centers only spies on some Americans – those who appear to be a threat to the government. In trying to clear up the ‘misconceptions’ about the conduct of fusion centers, Arkansas State Fusion Center Director Richard Davis simply confirmed Americans’ fears: the center does in fact spy on Americans – but only on those who are suspected to be ‘anti-government’...After claiming that his office ‘absolutely’ does not spy on Americans, he proceeded to explain that this does not apply to those who could be interpreted as a ‘threat’ to national security...But Davis’ argument is flawed: in order to determine whether or not someone is considered a threat to national security, fusion centers would first have to spy on Americans to weed out the suspected individuals, and then proceed to spy on the ‘anti-government’ individuals further. Across the US, fusion centers have reported on individuals who conducted ‘crimes’ like putting political stickers in public bathrooms or participating in movements against the death penalty. In October, the bipartisan Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations finished a two-year investigation on fusion centers, only to find that the centers had directly violated constitutionally protected civil liberties.” Investigative reporter Michael Iskoﬀ [continued](#) down this road, saying in Open Channel NBC that “in a [107-page report](#) released late Tuesday, the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations said that Homeland Security has spent up to \$1.4 billion funding fusion centers — in effect, regional intelligence sharing centers- that have produced “useless” reports while at the same time collecting information on the innocent activities of American Muslims that may have violated a federal privacy law...In addition to the value of much of the fusion centers’ work, the Senate panel found evidence of what it called “troubling” reports by some centers that may have violated the civil liberties and privacy of U.S. citizens. The evidence cited in the report could fuel a continuing controversy over claims that the FBI and some local police departments, notably New York City’s, have [spied on American Muslims](#) without a justifiable law enforcement reason for doing so...It stated that much basic information about the fusion centers – including exactly how much they cost the federal government — was difficult to obtain.” The Washington Post also wrote [about this](#), saying that “an initiative aimed at improving intelligence sharing has done little to make the country more secure, despite as much as \$1.4 billion in federal spending, according to a two-year examination by Senate investigators.” Firedoglake, a liberal blog, also [had a story](#) about the issue noted that “a scathing report released days ago by a Senate subcommittee concluded Department of Homeland Security fusion centers at the state and local level had not “produced useful intelligence to support federal counterterrorism efforts.”...The findings are not abnormal. They reflect the fact that these fusion centers have often been used for neo-COINTELPRO operations...In conclusion, the subcommittee report affirms the worst fears or concerns shared by civil liberties organizations. Indeed, its officials engage in operations similar to operations FBI agents engaged in during the days of COINTELPRO...In the particular case of the fusion centers, this entire network cannot be said to keep Americans safe because they produce mostly useless intelligence reports. And the network should be dismantled.”

The opinion of the American people is usually to react with anger and outrage against mass surveillance, in poll after poll. In 2005, Gallup [had a poll](#) and there were high majorities against invasive government measures: 60% opposed “allowing the government to search a list of books people have checked out of the library,” 70% opposed “allowing police to stop people on the street at random to search their possessions,” 73% opposed “making it easier for legal authorities to read mail, e-mail, or tap phones without the person’s knowledge,” 75% opposed “allowing the government to imprison U.S. citizens who are suspected of terrorism without putting them on trial for years,” and 93% opposed “allowing police to enter a person’s home at any time without a search warrant.”

The next year, a USA Today/Gallup poll had a smaller amount, with [barely a majority](#) (51%) disapproving of “the federal government’s program to compile billions of telephone records it obtained from three of the leading telephone companies in the United States.” In a poll in 2011, 71% said that “the government should take all steps necessary to prevent additional acts of terrorism...if those steps would violate your basic civil liberties,” the highest since the question was asked! However, 70% still trust the government to protect us from terrorism as noted in [a poll after the Boston bombings](#) and a high majority of people interestingly [still trust the TSA](#)!

On a foreign level, surveillance is even prevalent. In Canada there was a program [called PROFUNC](#) which was meant to go after supposed communist groups in the country in part by creating arrest documents based on personal information. The Guardian [wrote that](#)

“the UK’s electronic eavesdropping and security agency, GCHQ, has been secretly gathering intelligence from the world’s biggest internet companies through a covertly run operation set up by America’s top spy agency, documents obtained by the Guardian reveal.”

I still remember meeting with a GCHQ employee at a Fleet Foxes concert where he only said the agency was like the NSA and that there were many employees in the US, going around. He didn’t describe his work, but I still will remember talking with him a bit. Australian spies even [want to break through the wall of Tor](#) which is an anonymous service which has helped people across the world revolt against their governments. An article about the last part of the quote was in BBC, [which said that](#)

““Talking” CCTV cameras that tell off people dropping litter or committing anti-social behaviour are to be extended to 20 areas across England. They are already used in Middlesbrough where people seen misbehaving can be told to stop via a loudspeaker, controlled by control centre staff...The talking cameras will be installed in Southwark, Barking and Dagenham, in London, Reading, Harlow, Norwich, Ipswich, Plymouth, Gloucester, Derby, Northampton, Mansfield, Nottingham, Coventry, Sandwell, Wirral, Blackpool, Salford, South Tyneside and Darlington...In Middlesbrough, staff in a control centre monitor pictures from 12 talking cameras and can communicate directly with people on the street...There are an estimated 4.2 million CCTV cameras in Britain. A recent study by the government’s privacy watchdog, the Information Commissioner, warned that Britain was becoming a “surveillance society.”

At the same time, the “war on whistleblowers” continues in light of these revelations and Anonymous is [trolling the NSA](#). It seems the police state [Russ Feingold warned of in 2001](#) has come, which is partly why John Nichols says [we need another Russ Feingold](#), and the 4th amendment has gone to shreds. The EFF says we need [a new Church Committee](#) which The Nation called for years ago in their article on the “Secret Government.” Anti-Flag sings in their song, I’m Being Watched by the CIA speaks of their covert operations: “I’m being watched/I’m being watched/I’m being watched by the CIA” and their song, Welcome to 1984 is very telling as well. Bauhaus sings in their song The Spy in the Cab, “Hidden in the dashboard/The unseen mechanized eye/Under surveillance/The road is full of cats eyes/It’s sick function to pry/The spy in the cab.” Let us not forget the words that Gore Vidal [uttered to Democracy Now!](#) in 2006,

"This is an unpatriotic government. This is a government that deals openly in illegalities, whether it is attacking a country which has done us no harm...because we now believe, not in declaring war through Congress as the Constitution requires, but through the President...And so as he comes with his State of the Union, which he is going to justify eavesdropping without judicial warrants on anybody in the United States that he wants to listen in on. This is what we call dictatorship...You know, it's at a time when people say, 'Well, it makes no difference what we do, you know, if we march and we make speeches, and this and that.' It makes a lot of difference if millions of Americans just say, 'We are fed up! We don't like you. We don't like what you're doing to the country and what you have done to the country. We don't like to live in a lawless land, where the rule of law has just been bypassed and hacks are appointed to the federal bench, who will carry on and carry on and carry on all of the illegalities which are so desperately needed by our military-industrial corporate masters.'"

People of the US, let us unite against this fascistic American imperial-national security state which has grown out of control!

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