NSA slides explain the PRISM data-collection program

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The top-secret PRISM program allows the U.S. intelligence community to gain access from nine Internet companies to a wide range of digital information, including e-mails and stored data, on foreign targets operating outside the United States. The program is court-approved but does not require individual warrants. Instead, it operates under a broader authorization from federal judges who oversee the use of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA). Some documents describing the program were first released by The Washington Post on June 6. The newly released documents below give additional details about how the program operates, including the levels of review and supervisory control at the NSA and FBI. The documents also show how the program interacts with the Internet companies. These slides, annotated by The Post, represent a selection from the overall document, and certain portions are redacted. Read related article.

New slides published June 29

**Acquiring data from a new target**

This slide describes what happens when an NSA analyst "tasks" the PRISM system for information about a new surveillance target. The request to add a new target is passed automatically to a supervisor who reviews the "selectors," or search terms. The supervisor must endorse the analyst's "reasonable belief," defined as 51 percent confidence, that the specified target is a foreign national who is overseas at the time of collection.
Analyzing information collected from private companies

After communications information is acquired, the data are processed and analyzed by specialized systems that handle voice, text, video and "digital network information" that includes the locations and unique device signatures of targets.
Each target is assigned a case notation

The PRISM case notation format reflects the availability, confirmed by The Post's reporting, of real-time surveillance as well as stored content.
Searching the PRISM database

On April 5, according to this slide, there were 117,675 active surveillance targets in PRISM's counterterrorism database. The slide does not show how many other Internet users, and among them how many Americans, have their communications collected "incidentally" during surveillance of those targets.

Depending on the provider, the NSA may receive live notifications when a target logs on or sends an e-mail, or may monitor a voice, text or voice chat as it happens (noted on the first slide as "Surveillance").
Introducing the program

A slide briefing analysts at the National Security Agency about the program touts its effectiveness and features the logos of the companies involved.
Monitoring a target's communication

This diagram shows how the bulk of the world's electronic communications move through companies based in the United States.

The program is called PRISM, after the prisms used to split light, which is used to carry information on fiber-optic cables.

This note indicates that the program is the number one source of raw intelligence used for NSA analytic reports.

The seal of Special Source Operations, the NSA term for alliances with trusted U.S. companies.
Providers and data

The PRISM program collects a wide range of data from the nine companies, although the details vary by provider.
**Participating providers**

This slide shows when each company joined the program, with Microsoft being the first, on Sept. 11, 2007, and Apple the most recent, in October 2012.
Dates When PRISM Collection Began For Each Provider

PRISM Program Cost: ~ $20M per year

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Corporations collect more data than most people have any knowledge of when people use the internet. A lot more than the Government. Sold to the highest bidder, this data is stored in private databases. Yes it includes who you are, where you live and up until recently included pictures of the users utilizing the devices (outlawed less than a year ago). These corporations are not bound by any ethics in sharing your data to anyone/country/government. Only money and growth is the motivation and...

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Key fact, Prism is only one name of only one eavesdropping program. Of course, there were and are others.

Hope and change.

Interesting that it started back in 2007, just after the Democrats took over the Senate and House.

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NSA director says he has 'no opinion' of WikiLeaks, 'I really don't track them'

Poll: Public wants congressional hearings on NSA surveillance

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You mean, after the Patriot Act's first renewal.

They that can give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety deserve neither safety nor liberty.

--Benjamin Franklin--

Yeah, and back then, they didn't bother to provide security details to presidents because it was unthinkable that anyone would ever want to assassinate them.

Times have changed. A database of phone calls made to foreigners does not bother me, neither does the ability of the government to intercept online communications of approved targets.

Think about it. The secret documents reveal a process that is a real pain, with paperwork, judicial review, and is limited to individual targets. What good is... See More
1) Analyst wants to see something.
2) Analyst puts in secret request to secret FISA court, who have approved over 33,000 requests and denied 11 since they started... so it's rubber stamp approval with minimal oversight.
3) Now that they have secret approval from a secret source who approves everything; we're done. Go ahead, violate the privacy of citizens... that's all you need.

Surprisingly a lot of people are ok with this.

Why did they deny those 11 then? Just for kicks? Could it be that the court actually works with the requester to modify their surveillance and intercept plans so better protect civil liberties? Did it ever cross your tiny little mind that the judges may approve requests that don't contain every single thing the intelligence agency analyst asks for?