



AT&T Helped the NSA Spy on Internet Traffic

National Security Agency (NSA) documents recently provided to the *New York Times* and ProPublica by former intelligence contractor and whistleblower Edward J. Snowden reveal that AT&T has provided valuable assistance to the NSA that enhanced the agency's ability to spy on Internet traffic. The *Times* and ProPublica (an independent non-profit newsroom) jointly reviewed the documents supplied by Snowden and published their findings simultaneously.

**at&t**

The report's most significant finding expanded on what has long been known — that American telecommunications companies have worked closely with the NSA. The agency's relationship with AT&T, however, is considered unique and especially productive. One of the source documents reviewed by the journalists described it as "highly collaborative," and another praised AT&T's "extreme willingness to help."

The report was written by ProPublica's Julia Angwin and Jeff Larson, *Times*' Washington bureau reporter Charlie Savage, German freelance journalist Henrik Moltke, Laura Poitras (the Oscar-winning documentary maker who worked jointly with former *Guardian* journalist Glenn Greenwald, the first to publish Snowden's original revelations in 2013), and *Times*' reporter James Risen, who won the 2006 Pulitzer Prize for National Reporting for his articles about President George W. Bush's warrantless wiretapping program.

According to the report, Snowden's documents do not identify the firms that assisted the NSA by name, but instead refer to the programs codenamed "Fairview" and "Stormbrew." The *Times* and ProPublica analyzed the documents and found what they called "a constellation of evidence" that Fairview was AT&T and that Stormbrew included Verizon and MCI, which Verizon has since acquired.

The documents provided a treasure trove of information about AT&T's cooperation with the NSA in engaging in domestic spying of Internet traffic. Among the information revealed:

- AT&T has given the NSA access to billions of e-mails traveling across its domestic networks.
- NSA's top-secret budget in 2013 for its partnership with AT&T was more than twice that of the next-largest surveillance program.
- AT&T installed surveillance equipment in at least 17 of its Internet hubs on U.S. soil, far more than its comparably sized competitor, Verizon.

Spokesmen for the NSA, AT&T, and Verizon would not discuss the findings from the files with the article's authors, who quoted an AT&T spokesman: "We don't comment on matters of national security."

These details about AT&T's relationship with the NSA published by the *Times* and ProPublica on August 15 are only the latest revelations culled from documents supplied by Snowden since he first went public with documentation about the NSA's bulk collection of U.S. telephone call records in 2013. Snowden



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on August 17, 2015

first made contact with Greenwald in late 2012, but the *Guardian* journalist at first found Snowden's data encryption demands to be burdensome, and was reluctant to cooperate. Snowden then decided to contact Poitras. After Poitras met with Greenwald and asked him to become involved, Snowden began providing both journalists with documents, after which Snowden promised that nothing would stop subsequent disclosures. In June 2013, he said, "All I can say right now is the U.S. government is not going to be able to cover this up by jailing or murdering me. Truth is coming, and it cannot be stopped."

The Guardian published his first documents on June 5, 2013 and they prompted a worldwide reaction as many large media outlets began disseminating the reports.

On June 21, 2013, the Justice Department charged Snowden with two counts of violating the Espionage Act, and the following day the State Department revoked his passport. Days later, he flew to Moscow, where he asked for asylum and has remained ever since, in self-imposed exile.

Last year, former U.S. representative and presidential candidate Ron Paul (R-Texas) announced his sponsorship of a petition to bring Edward Snowden home. An explanatory note on Paul's website stated, in part:

Edward Snowden shocked the world when he exposed the NSA's illegal and abusive spying program. Instead of applauding him for his bravery and patriotism, the U.S. government labels Snowden a traitor.

In the video announcing the petition, Paul said:

On June 5th, 2013, Edward Snowden sacrificed his livelihood, citizenship, and freedom by exposing the disturbing scope of the NSA's worldwide spying program. Thanks to one man's courageous actions, Americans know about the truly egregious ways their government is spying on them. By signing this petition, you are telling the US government that Mr. Snowden deserves the right to come home without the fear of persecution or imprisonment.

Our government has not relented in its efforts to prosecute Snowden, and he remains in exile. From this latest report published by the *Times* and ProPublica, however, it is apparent that the former intelligence contractor has more information to make public and influential American journalists who are willing to publish that information. This past June, the *Times* and ProPublica published another report based on Snowden's information, revealing that the Obama administration has expanded the NSA's warrantless surveillance of Americans' international Internet traffic for the stated purpose of searching for evidence of malicious computer hacking. That report noted that while the USA Freedom Act signed into law on June 2 limited some of the NSA's authority, it involved only a few provisions in the USA PATRIOT Act dealing with the collection of phone records and did not curtail the warrantless wiretapping program.

Until more members of Congress take Snowden's revelations more seriously, they will be remiss in their sworn obligation to uphold the Constitution, which includes the Fourth Amendment. That amendment safeguards Americans' right to be free from unreasonable searches and prohibits the government from engaging in warrantless searches.

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