

NSA Reportedly Broke Privacy Rules Thousands Of Times

Monday, August 19, 2013 | John Branch, The Washington Post



The National Security Agency has overstepped its authority and broken privacy rules thousands of times every year since being given new surveillance powers by Congress in 2008 citing an internal audit and other secret documents. The documents, which the Post received earlier this summer from NSA leaker Edward Snowden, detail how the controversial agency has crossed the line many times over in its collection of massive amounts of data from around the world.

Despite repeated claims by officials that the NSA does not spy on Americans, the Post reports that the bulk of the infractions involved improper surveillance of Americans or foreign targets in the U.S. Some of the infractions were inadvertent, caused by typographical errors resulting in U.S. calls or emails being intercepted. Others were more serious.

The most significant violations included the unauthorized use of information on more than 3,000 Americans and green-card holders. In another incident, a "large number" of calls from Washington were intercepted in 2008 after the Washington area code 202 was confused with the code 20, which is the code for dialing to Egypt. In total, an NSA audit from May 2012 reportedly found 2,776 incidents in the prior 12 months of improper collection and handling of communications. In another case, the special court that oversees the NSA did not learn about a new collection method until it had been underway for months. The court ruled the method unconstitutional, according to the Post.

"NSA's foreign intelligence collection activities are continually audited and overseen internally and externally," an NSA official said. "When NSA makes a mistake in carrying out its foreign intelligence mission, the agency reports the issue internally and to federal overseers -- and aggressively gets to the bottom of it." In a statement, the NSA said it tries to identify problems "at the earliest possible moment, implement mitigation measures wherever possible and drive the numbers down." "We're a human-run agency operating in a complex environment with a number of different regulatory regimes, so at times we find ourselves on the wrong side of the line," a senior NSA official told the newspaper. The details shed light on the errors and violations in the NSA collection efforts that administration officials so far have addressed only in broad terms.

When the intelligence community made key documents public in late July about the nature of the NSA collection effort, one document said that "there have been a number of technical compliance problems and human implementation errors" in programs that collect both bulk phone and email records. The document did not reveal much more, other than to state that no "intentional or bad-faith violations" were found. The document said only that the missteps resulted in the "automated tools operating in a manner that was not completely consistent with the specific terms of the court's order."

The report showed infractions were widespread. The report said despite the sharp growth in oversight staff, infractions increased through 2011 and early 2012. It was not clear whether the trend continued after that. President Obama recently vowed to provide more transparency and oversight in the process, but has not bowed to calls to fundamentally change the surveillance programs. Some in Congress, like Rep. Peter King, R-N.Y., and leaders of the congressional intelligence committees, have described the collection efforts as critical to national security. Others say they have gone too far and run the risk of infringing on Americans' right to privacy.

A separate Washington Post report on Thursday also said the chief judge of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court acknowledged that its ability to provide oversight of the spying programs is limited.

In his defense, Edward Snowden made the following statement to the Huffington Post: *It has come to my attention that news organizations seeking information regarding my current situation have, due to the difficulty in contacting me directly, been misled by individuals associated with my father into printing false claims about my situation. I would like to correct the record: I've been fortunate to have legal advice from an international team of some of the finest lawyers in the world, and to work with journalists whose integrity and courage are beyond question. There is no conflict amongst myself and any of the individuals or organizations with whom I have been involved. Neither my father, his lawyer Bruce Fein, nor his wife Mattie Fein represent me in any way. None of them have been or are involved in my current situation, and this will not change in the future. I ask journalists to understand that they do not possess any special knowledge regarding my situation or future plans, and not to exploit the tragic vacuum of my father's emotional compromise for the sake of tabloid news. Thank you.*

Next Generation Sunshine State Standards adapted from floridastandards.org. Standards specifically addressed in this edition are strategically aligned with state standards and annotated adjacent to the respective inquiry.

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1. In appropriate paragraph form, compare and contrast the pros and cons synonymous with National Security Agency whistleblower, Edward Snowden, blatantly leaking confidential mass surveillance details to the media. Provided Snowden's aforementioned statement coupled with applicable information revealed above, would you personally describe Snowden as a traitor or patriot? Thoroughly explain your reasoning and provide specific artifacts and evidence not limited solely to passage above to support your response. Create and illustrate a Venn Diagram to effectively explore relationships and patterns and to make arguments about relationships between sets. **(LA.910.3.2.2; LA.910.1.6.2; MA.912.D.7.2; MA.912.A.10.1)**
2. Define a variable; write an algebraic *expression*, and accurately modeling three unique phrases based upon the passage above into an input-output table. Compare and contrast the differences and similarities as they pertain to algebraic expressions and equations. **(MA.912.A.10.1; MA.912.A.2.13; MA.912.A.3.5)**
3. Deductive reasoning is the process of reasoning logically from given facts to a conclusion whereas with inductive reasoning we simply utilize patterns to make predictions. Design an algebraic *equation* that effectively models a situation as described in the passage above. Using deductive reasoning, meticulously justify each step with specific reasons such as properties, definitions, and rules not limited to but to include the distributive, associative, and communicative properties of real numbers. Construct a modified two-column proof to differentiate between the mathematics and properties applied in determining the solution. **(MA.912.A.10.1; MA.912.A.2.13; MA.912.A.3.5; MA.912.A.3.2)**
4. USA Today suggests Snowden has been offered asylum by three Latin American countries — Venezuela, Bolivia and Nicaragua — but has been unable to travel since the U.S. revoked his passport and charged him under the Espionage Act for leaking information to reporters about the NSA's worldwide surveillance and data-gathering networks. Nicaragua is located approximately 2498 miles northwest of Bolivia. Venezuela is located about sixteen twenty-fifths of the total distance. Illustrate a sketch accurately representing this situation. Employ the ruler and/or segment addition postulate to determine each segment length and tell whether they are congruent. Label the locations appropriately and determine the distance between Nicaragua to Venezuela. Is the solution reasonable in the context of the original situation? **(MA.912.G.8.2; MA.912.G.8.3; MA.912.G.1.1)**
5. Identify and thoroughly support your reasoning regarding which of the following that best describes the author's attitude toward the subject matter discussed: flippant disregard, mild frustration, passive resignation or an informed citizen. Explain the primary purpose of this passage and identify any indicators, which suggest the author may possess a bias for or against allegations of unauthorized surveillance activity via the NSA. What is the central idea and what conclusion might one obtain from this passage? Provide an inference prospective domestic terrorists may derive from this passage. Explain your reasoning. **(RI.9-10.1 – 10.6)**
6. Using contextual clues only, determine the most complete and accurate definitions of following italicized terms: *infringing*, *infractions*, *implementation*, *audited*, *mitigation*, *asylum*, *regulatory*, *inadvertent*, *intercepted*, and *controversial* as obtained from the passage above. Additionally, use each word in a complete sentence to demonstrate further comprehension. **(LA.910.1.6.3; LA.910.1.6.1)**
7. **SARASOTA MILITARY ACADEMY WORD-OF-THE-WEEK** Create a concluding paragraph aligned with the passage above using the following italicized word: *Capacious* adj. Capable of containing a large quantity; spacious or roomy. **(LA.910.1.6.1; LA.910.1.6.5)**

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