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NSA MAY BE READING WINDOWS SOFTWARE IN YOUR COMPUTER

By Sherwood Ross

Sooner or later, a country that spies on its neighbors will turn on its own people, violating their privacy, stealing their liberties.

President Bush's grab for unchecked eavesdropping powers is the culmination of what the National Security Agency(NSA) has spent forty years doing unto others.

And if you're upset by the idea of NSA tapping your phone, be advised NSA allegedly can also read your Windows software to access your computer. European investigative reporter Duncan Campbell claimed NSA had arranged with Microsoft to insert special "keys" in Windows software starting with versions from 95-OSR2 onwards.

And the intelligence arm of the French Defense Ministry also asserted NSA helped to install secret programs in Microsoft software. According to France's Strategic Affairs Delegation report, "it would seem that the creation of Microsoft was largely supported, not least financially, by NSA, and that IBM was made to accept the (Microsoft) MS-DOS operating system by the same administration." That report was

published in 1999.

The French reported a "strong suspicion of a lack of security fed by insistent rumours about the existence of spy programmes on Microsoft, and by the presence of NSA personnel in Bill Gates' development teams." It noted the Pentagon was Microsoft's biggest global client.

In the U.S., Andrew Fernandez, chief computer scientist with Cryptonym, of Morrisville, N.C., found Microsoft developers had failed to remove debugging symbols used to test his software before they released it.

Inside the code Fernandez found labels for two keys, dubbed "KEY" and "NSAKEY". Fernandez, though, termed it NSA's "back door" into the world's most widely used operation system. He said this makes it "orders of magnitude easier for the US government to access your computer." Microsoft called the report "completely false."

Apparently, agencies of the military-industrial complex take on a life of their own. NSA, for example, has long engaged in commercial espionage eavesdropping on European businesses to benefit U.S. firms, according to William Blum, author of "Rogue State" (Common Courage Press). NSA achieves this through ECHELON("E") – an intelligence cartel dominated by the U.S. with Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand and Canada as junior partners. Launched in the 1970s to monitor Cold War data, "E" morphed into "a network of massive, highly automated

interception stations covering the globe," Blum said.

Using "E", NSA has spied on German and French businesses which, as a result, have come off second best against their American competitors. Among companies targeted were Thomson S.A., of Paris, Airbus Industrie of Blagnac Cedex, France, and the German wind generator-manufacturer Enercon.

"We know this technology("E") is there and it is being used on us," Josef Tarkowski, former head of counter-espionage for the German government told The London *Sunday Times* Internet Edition.

"Like a mammoth vacuum cleaner in the sky," Blum documents, NSA's continuously orbiting satellites "sucks it all up: home phone, office phone, cellular phone, email, fax, telex... satellite transmissions, fiber-optic communications traffic, microwave links...voice, text, images."

These are then processed by high-powered computers at Ft. Meade, Md., NSA headquarters. Billions of messages are sucked up daily, Blum writes, including those by presidents, prime ministers, the UN Secretary-General, the pope, the Queen of England, transnational corporation executives, and foreign embassies.

It's been estimated "E" sifts through 99.9999 percent of all global communications to get at the 0.0001 percent that is of interest to it. Each of

the English-speaking partners, Blum asserts, "is breaking its own laws, those of other countries, and international law --- the absence of court-issued warrants permitting surveillance of specific individuals is but one example."

"E" works by mining for key words that are extracted by computers and passed along to humans for evaluation. Some NSA activities came to light during the countdown to the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003.

At the time, the U.S. listened in on the private conversations of UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, UN weapons inspectors in Iraq, and on the deliberations about Iraq of all members of the UN Security Council. It also spied on organizations such as Christian Aid and Amnesty International. Earlier, it was said to have spied on U.S. Senator Strom Thurmond(R.-S.C.)

Less well known has been E's spying on foreign firms. In 1998, German wind generator-maker Enercon developed a cheaper way to generate electricity from wind power, but its U.S. rival, Kenetech, said it had patented a near-identical process, and got a court order to ban Enercon sales in the U.S., reporter Blum writes. NSA's role was exposed when one of its employees revealed he had stolen Enercon's secrets by tapping telephone and computer links between its research and production units.

Again, NSA, with CIA aid, Blum and other sources say, obtained covert information from French Airbus Industrie that enabled its U.S. rivals

Boeing and McDonnell Douglas to win a \$1 billion contract. "The same agencies also eavesdropped on Japanese representatives during negotiations with the U.S. in 1995 over auto parts trade," Blum added.

The *Sunday Times* also reported Thomas-CSF, a French electronics maker, lost a \$1.4 billion deal to supply Brazil with radar because the U.S. intercepted details of the negotiations and passed them to Raytheon, the U.S. firm that makes the Patriot missile. Raytheon won the contract.

"E" is headquartered on British soil on a 560-acre base at Menwith Hill, in North Yorkshire, the largest listening post in the world, taken over by NSA in 1966. As well, the U.S. operates an enormous radar and communications complex at Bad Aibling, near Munich, that is also an NSA intercept station, and a dozen signals intelligence bases in Japan.

NSA also read other peoples' mail by inking a secret agreement with Crypto AG, a Swiss maker of encryption technology, to rig their machines before sale so that when foreign governments used the random encryption key the enciphered message would be clandestinely transmitted to NSA.

The result: when Iran, Iraq, Libya, Yugoslavia and more than 100 other countries sent messages to their embassies, trade offices, and armed forces around the world via telex, fax, and radio, NSA spooks could read them. NSA, by the way, employs some 30,000 workers and, if it were a private

corporation, would rank among the top 50 on the "Fortune 500."

It's budget, of course, is secret but it's a bet NSA is cheerfully gobbling up umpteen billions of your tax dollars every year. Of course, other countries today emulate NSA's activities. China, for example, is said to have hacked into British defense and foreign policy secrets and the German weekly *Der Spiegel* recently reported German computers at the chancellery, and foreign, economic, and research ministries are infected by Chinese espionage programs.

Rather than shutting down or curbing NSA activities, President Bush is expanding NSA's role.

Even if a rubber stamp Congress goes along, not everybody approves. The American Bar Association, our largest lawyer group, has denounced Bush's warrantless domestic surveillance program. "The issue is whether the president can unilaterally conduct secret surveillance, taking into his hands the awesome power to invade privacy,"

ABA President Michael Greco said. Greco may be upset because the Bill of Rights declares:

"The right of people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things

to be seized."

But what did George Washington know
compared to George
Bush?

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