

افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نیاشد تن من مباد بدین بوم ویر زنده یک تن مباد
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهیم از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهیم

www.afgazad.com

afgazad@gmail.com

European Languages

زبان های اروپایی

Antiwar.com

Everybody's a Target in the American Surveillance State

By John W. Whitehead

March 27, 2012

"Everybody's a target; everybody with communication is a target."

– A senior intelligence official previously involved with the Utah Data Center

In the small town of Bluffdale, Utah, not far from bustling Salt Lake City, the federal government is quietly erecting what will be the crown jewel of its surveillance empire. Rising up out of the desert landscape, the Utah Data Center (UDC) — a \$2 billion behemoth designed to house a network of computers, satellites, and phone lines that stretches across the world — is intended to serve as the central hub of the National Security Agency's vast spying infrastructure. Once complete (the UDC is expected to be fully operational by September 2013), the last link in the chain of the electronic concentration camp that surrounds us will be complete, and privacy, as we have known it, will be extinct.

At five times the size of the U.S. Capitol, the UDC will be a clearinghouse and a depository for every imaginable kind of information — whether innocent or not, private or public — including communications, transactions, and the like. Anything and everything you've ever said or done, from the trivial to the damning — phone calls, Facebook posts, Twitter tweets, Google searches, emails, bookstore and grocery purchases, bank statements, commuter toll records, etc. — will be tracked, collected, catalogued, and analyzed by the UDC's supercomputers and teams of government agents. In this way, by sifting through the detritus of your once-private life, the

government will come to its own conclusions about who you are, where you fit in, and how best to deal with you should the need arise.

What little we know about this highly classified spy center — which will be operated by the National Security Agency (NSA) — comes from James Bamford, a former intelligence analyst and an expert on the highly secretive government agency. [Bamford's exposé](#) in *Wired*, a must-read for anyone concerned about the loss of our freedoms in a technological age, provides a chilling glimpse into the government's plans for total control, aka total information awareness. As Bamford notes, the NSA “has transformed itself into the largest, most covert, and potentially most intrusive intelligence agency ever created. In the process — and for the first time since Watergate and the other scandals of the Nixon administration — the NSA has turned its surveillance apparatus on the U.S. and its citizens.”

Supposedly created by the NSA in order to track foreign threats to America, as well as to shore up cybersecurity and battle hackers, the UDC's technological capabilities are astounding. As the central depository for all of the information gathered by the NSA's vast spy centers, the UDC's supercomputers will be capable of downloading data amounting to the entire contents of the Library of Congress *every six hours*. However, the data being targeted goes far beyond the scope of terrorist threats. In fact, as Bamford points out, the NSA is interested in nothing less than the “so-called invisible web, also known as the deep Web or deepnet — data beyond the reach of the public. This includes password-protected data, U.S. and foreign government communications, and noncommercial file-sharing between trusted peers.”

The loss of privacy resulting from such aggressive surveillance systems highlights very dramatically the growing problem of large public and private institutions in relation to the individual citizen. What we are witnessing, in the name of so-called security and efficiency, is the creation of a new class system comprising the *watched* (average Americans such as you and me) and the *watchers* (government bureaucrats, technicians, and private corporations). The growing need for technicians necessitates the bureaucracy. The massive bureaucracies — now computerized — that administer governmental policy are a *permanent* form of government. Presidents come and go, but the nonelected bureaucrats remain.

The question looms before us. Can freedom in the United States continue to flourish and grow in an age when the physical movements, individual purchases, conversations, and meetings of every citizen are constantly under surveillance by private companies and government agencies?

Whether or not the surveillance is undertaken for “innocent” reasons, does not surveillance of all citizens, even the innocent sort, gradually poison the soul of a nation? Does not surveillance limit personal options — deny freedom of choice — for many individuals? Does not surveillance increase the powers of those who are in a position to enjoy the fruits of this activity? Is not *control* the name of the game?

We are all becoming data collected in government files. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, who suffered under the secret police in the Soviet Union, wrote about this process some years ago:

As every man goes through life he fills in a number of forms for the record, each containing a number of questions.... There are thus hundreds of little threads radiating from every man, millions of threads in all. If these threads were suddenly to become visible, the whole sky would look like a spider's web, and if they materialized like rubber bands, buses and trams and even people would lose the ability to move and the wind would be unable to carry torn-up newspapers or autumn leaves along the streets of the city.

Thus, we come back to the NSA's spy center. That the NSA, which has shown itself to care little for constitutional limits or privacy, is the driving force behind this spy center is no surprise. The agency, which is three times the size of the CIA, consumes one third of the intelligence budget and has a global spy network, has a long history of spying on Americans — whether or not it has always had the authorization to do so. Take, for instance, the warrantless wiretapping program conducted during the Bush years, which resulted in the NSA monitoring the private communications of millions of Americans — a program that continues unabated today, with help from private telecommunications companies such as AT&T. The program recorded 320 million phone calls *a day* when it first started. It is estimated that the NSA has intercepted 15 to 20 trillion communications of American citizens since 9/11.

What has proven to be surprising to some is that the Obama White House has proven to be just as bad, if not worse, than the Bush White House when it comes to invading the privacy rights of Americans. As Yale law professor Jack Balkin notes, "We are witnessing the bipartisan normalization and legitimization of a national-surveillance state. [Obama has] systematically adopted policies consistent with the second term of the Bush administration." Unfortunately, whereas those on the left raised a hue and cry over the Bush administration's constant encroachments on Americans' privacy rights, it appears that the political leanings of those on the left have held greater sway than their principles. Consequently, the Obama administration has faced much less criticism for its blatant efforts to reinforce the surveillance state.

Clearly, the age of privacy in America is coming to a close. We have moved into a new paradigm in which surveillance technology that renders everyone a suspect is driving the bureaucratic ship that once was our democratic republic. By the time this UDC spy center is fully operational, no phone call, no email, no Tweet, no Web search is safe from the prying eyes and ears of the government. People going about their daily business will no longer be assured that they are not being spied upon by federal agents and other government bureaucrats.