



## **NSA Triples Collection Of U.S. Phone Records To 534 Million**

The U.S. Intelligence network has gone rogue against Americans, disregarding Congress and courts, to massively increase warrantless surveillance on civilians. The NSA is behaving as if it is unaccountable to anyone except its technocrat managers. Technocrats are compulsive and addictive data hoarders. □ TN Editor

The U.S. National Security Agency collected 534 million records of phone calls and text messages of Americans last year, more than triple gathered in 2016, a U.S. intelligence agency report released on Friday said.

The sharp increase from 151 million occurred during the second full year of a new surveillance system established at the spy agency after U.S. lawmakers passed a law in 2015 that sought to limit its ability to collect such records in bulk.

The spike in collection of call records coincided with an increase reported on Friday across other surveillance methods, raising questions from some privacy advocates who are concerned about potential government overreach and intrusion into the lives of U.S. citizens.

The 2017 call records tally remained far less than an estimated billions of records collected per day under the NSA's old bulk surveillance system, which was exposed by former U.S. intelligence contractor Edward Snowden in 2013.

The records collected by the NSA include the numbers and time of a call or text message, but not their content.

Overall increases in surveillance hauls were both mystifying and alarming coming years after Snowden's leaks, privacy advocates said.

"The intelligence community's transparency has yet to extend to explaining dramatic increases in their collection," said Robyn Greene, policy counsel at the Washington-based Open Technology Institute that focuses on digital issues.

The government "has not altered the manner in which it uses its authority to obtain call detail records," Timothy Barrett, a spokesman at the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, which released the annual report, said in a statement.

The NSA has found that a number of factors may influence the amount of records collected, Barrett said. These included the number of court-approved selection terms, which could be a phone number of someone who is potentially the subject of an investigation, or the amount of historical information retained by phone service providers, Barrett said.

"We expect this number to fluctuate from year to year," he said.

U.S. intelligence officials have said the number of records collected would include multiple calls made to or from the same phone numbers and involved a level of duplication when obtaining the same record of a call from two different companies.

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