



Joint Statement by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence and the Department of Justice on Court-ordered Legal Surveillance of U.S. Persons

DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE

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It is entirely false that U.S. intelligence agencies conduct electronic surveillance of political, religious or activist figures solely because they disagree with public policies or criticize the government, or for exercising constitutional rights.

Unlike some other nations, the United States does not monitor anyone's communications in order to suppress criticism or to put people at a disadvantage based on their ethnicity, race, gender, sexual orientation or religion.

Our intelligence agencies help protect America by collecting communications when they have a legitimate foreign intelligence or counterintelligence purpose.

With limited exceptions (for example, in an emergency), our intelligence agencies must have a court order from the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court to target any U.S. citizen or lawful permanent resident for electronic surveillance.

These court orders are issued by an independent federal judge only if probable cause, based on specific facts, are established that the person is an agent of a foreign power, a terrorist, a spy, or someone who takes orders from a foreign power.

No U.S. person can be the subject of surveillance based solely on First Amendment activities, such as staging public rallies, organizing campaigns, writing critical essays, or expressing personal beliefs.

On the other hand, a person who the court finds is an agent of a foreign power under this rigorous standard is not exempted just because of his or her occupation.

The United States is as committed to protecting privacy rights and individual freedom as we are to defending our national security.

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