

The program, known by its unclassified nickname "Stellar Wind," is code named "RAGTIME."

1. Who has access?

Only about 3 dozen NSA officials have access to the intercept data from RAGTIME's domestic counter-terrorism collection operation.

Source: tum.com

2. Who contributes to the program?

As many as 50 companies have provided data to the program

3. How does it collect data?

In order to collect on a target, the NSA needs one additional piece of evidence besides its own proprietary link-analysis protocols which assigns probability scores to each potential target.

Source: i-logue.com

4. How does it interact with NSA?

Although the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court rarely rejects RAGTIME-P requests, it often asks the NSA to provide more information before it approves them.

Source: en.wikipedia.org

5. What is program XKEYSCORE?

At Fort Meade, a program called XKEYSCORE processes all signals before they are shunted off to various "production lines" that deal with specific issues. PINWALE is the main NSA database for recorded signals intercepts. It is compartmentalized by keywords (the NSA calls them "selectors"). Metadata is stored in a database called MARINA and is generally retained for five years.

Source: williamarkin.wordpress.com

6. How do they access reporting?

"Finished reporting," or transcripts and analysis of calls, is accessed through the MAUI database. (Metadata is never included in MAUI.) There are dozens of other NSA signals activity lines, or SIGADS, that process data in parallel. Among the active databases and systems: ANCHORY, an all-source database for communications intelligence; HOMEBASE, which allows analysts to coordinate their searches with DNI mission priorities; AIRGAP, which deals with priority DOD missions; WRANGLER, which focuses on electronic intelligence; TINMAN, a database related to air warning and surveillance; OILSTOCK, a system for analyzing air warning and surveillance data; and many more.[i]

7. How does the FBI interact with the program?

The Bush Administration believed that the program was highly protected, and instructed the NSA to share only the most essential data with the FBI. But the FBI had "read in" more than 500 of its special agents. Had policy-makers been aware of this, sharing the RAGTIME data and its sources would have been much more efficient and would have allowed the FBI to separate the wheat from the chaff much more easily.

Image by Julie Jacobson / AP

8. What happened with the New York Times?

NSA Director Michael Hayden was secretly pleased that the New York Times withheld significant details of the program when the articles revealing it were first published, but he play-acted in public, castigating the Times for their indiscretion.

9. How does NSA know if something is wrong with the attorney general?

The set-up to the famous hospital-room confrontation between White House counsel Alberto Gonzales and ailing Attorney General John Ashcroft : James Comey, as acting attorney general, refused to affix his signature to a specific set of certifications provided by the Justice Department to Internet, financial and data companies, believing that the justification for providing the bulk data to the NSA was not sufficient. The White House panicked, because they worried that the companies would simply stop cooperating with the NSA if they suddenly didn't see the signature of attorney general. They would know that something was wrong.

Source: guardian.co.uk

10. What does Congress think about surveillance laws?

Congress repeatedly resisted the entreaties of the Bush Administration to change the surveillance laws once the RAGTIME program had been institutionalized. This was for a simple reason: they did not want to be responsible for a program that was not legal.

Source: news.cnet.com

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