

China paper hits out at US surveillance programme

June 16 2013, by Tom Hancock



A young computer expert studies at an internet security training centre, on February 14, 2013. China's official army newspaper has branded the United States Internet surveillance programme exposed by former spy Edward Snowden as "frightening", and accused the US of being a "habitual offender" when it comes to network monitoring.

China's official army newspaper on Sunday branded the United States Internet surveillance programme exposed by former spy Edward Snowden as "frightening", and accused the US of being a "habitual

offender" when it comes to network monitoring.

The People's Liberation Army (PLA) Daily hit out at the US for implying that spying on citizens from other countries was justified, and said that the PRISM monitoring programme had probably been used to collect large amounts of data unrelated to anti-terrorism operations.

The remarks about the programme are among the most scathing to appear in China's state-run press following Beijing's refusal to make an official comment.

"US [intelligence agencies](#) are 'habitual offenders' with regards to network monitoring and espionage," the article, attributed to the PLA's Foreign Languages Institute, said.

"There is reason to believe US intelligence agencies, while collecting anti-terrorism information online have also 'incidentally' collected a lot of information in other fields."

Under the so-called PRISM programme, the US [National Security Agency](#) can issue directives to [Internet firms](#) like [Google](#) or [Facebook](#) to gain access to emails, online chats, pictures, files and videos that have been uploaded by foreign users.

"US President Obama has said that PRISM is not directed at US citizens," the article said.

"The implication is that for the purposes of US security, monitoring citizens of other countries is not a problem. This simple, overbearing logic is the frightening aspect of the PRISM programme.

"The US government says that PRISM is concerned with anti-terrorism, and does not involve any other matters. But anyone with intelligence

expertise can tell this is admitting ones guilt by protesting innocence."

The PLA Foreign Languages institute is China's top military language training facility, and is thought to be a key training-ground for Chinese intelligence officers.

The article also accused the US of spying on its own citizens, saying that it had "clearly... not been established" that US intelligence agencies had only used the programme to monitor foreign nationals.

China has stayed tight lipped following the revelations from the former US government subcontractor, which included claims of US hacking directed at China and which came amid tensions between Washington and Beijing about online [espionage](#).

On Thursday China's foreign ministry gave little insight into Beijing's thinking.

"I have no information to offer," ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying told a regular briefing.

Snowden, who is in hiding in Hong Kong, has vowed to fight any attempt by the US to extradite him from the semi-autonomous Chinese territory.

The issue of cyber-security has emerged as major point of contention between the US and China, with US President Obama discussing the issue with China's top leader Xi Jinping at a summit earlier this month.

China and its military have denied that it engages in hacking attacks on foreign countries, despite multiple reports of extensive hacking operations carried out by PLA operatives against foreign targets.

China for years carried out extensive monitoring of its own citizens

Internet use, and has previously imprisoned several political dissidents based on emails obtained from US-based service provider Yahoo!.

The China Daily Thursday cited an analyst who noted the irony that the US's surveillance programme was exposed just as it began ramping up pressure on Beijing.

"It turns out that the biggest threat to the pursuit of individual freedom and privacy in the US is the unbridled power of the government," the paper quoted China Foreign Affairs University researcher Li Haidong as saying.

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