

Google, Yahoo, Facebook ask more data query disclosure

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Google, Facebook and Yahoo filed court requests Monday to disclose more about US government's national security data requests, saying media reports on the matter have been misleading and harmful.

Yahoo filed its petition with the US Foreign Intelligence Surveillance

Court, saying the [government](#) can protect public safety "without precluding Internet companies from sharing the number of [national security](#) requests they may receive."

"Ultimately, withholding such information breeds mistrust and suspicion—both of the United States and of companies that must comply with government legal directives," Yahoo general counsel Ron Bell said in a blog post.

Facebook also filed a court request, saying more transparency is needed.

"The actions and statements of the US government have not adequately addressed the concerns of people around the world about whether their information is safe and secure with Internet companies," Facebook general counsel Colin Stretch wrote in a blog post.

"We believe there is more information that the public deserves to know, and that would help foster an informed debate about whether government security programs adequately balance privacy interests when attempting to keep the public safe."

Google meanwhile filed an amended petition with the same court, which handles secret US government requests, saying media reports on the subject have been "false and misleading," and have hurt Google's reputation.

Google, which updated its request filed in June, said it is asking to be allowed "to publish detailed statistics about the types (if any) of national security requests we receive under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act," said a blog posting from Google executives Richard Salgado and Pablo Chavez.

"Given the important public policy issues at stake, we have also asked

the court to hold its hearing in open rather than behind closed doors. It's time for more transparency."

Several US tech firms have claimed that reports on the US government's secretive data collection programs have distorted how it works with intelligence and law enforcement. The firms have been asking for permission to disclose more on the nature of the requests and what is handed over.

Google's petition said that despite reports to the contrary, the US government "does not have direct access to its servers" and that it only complies with "lawful" requests.

Google said there is no statute or regulation which prohibits the company from disclosing the number of national security requests, and claims the government is interfering with its constitutional right to publish information.

Google, Facebook and Yahoo are among major Internet companies identified as participants in the PRISM program, described as a vast surveillance operation aimed at finding foreigners who are threats to the government. Other firms in the program included Microsoft, Apple and AOL.

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