

White House to keep NSA, cyber oversight together

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In this Oct. 29, 2013 file photo, Director of National Intelligence James Clapper testifies on Capitol Hill in Washington. The Obama administration will continue the National Security Agency's surveillance programs and cyber command operations under the direction of a single military commander, the first move in advance of what published reports described Friday as limited changes proposed by a task force that deliberated for months in secrecy. (AP Photo/ Evan Vucci, File)

A group reviewing the National Security Agency's surveillance programs

and cyber command operations sent President Barack Obama more than 40 recommendations on intelligence collection and government spying.

The White House did not make the task force's report public. Published reports Friday described the recommendations as limited in scope.

The Review Group on Intelligence and Communications Technology held no public meetings and met several times with business and privacy groups out of the range of the media and public. DNI head James Clapper exempted the panel from standard federal requirements that it work transparently.

The White House is reviewing the task force recommendations and finalizing its own internal study, National Security Council spokeswoman Caitlin Hayden said. She said the process was expected to be finished in January, after which Obama would speak publicly on any changes to the [government's](#) intelligence gathering and surveillance. The review board report is also expected to be made public after that point.

Although the [task force](#) has kept its recommendations secret, news organizations have sketched out proposals that would allow most of the NSA's surveillance programs to continue but change ownership of the government's large inventory of telephone records and restrict spying on allied nations. The Wall Street Journal reported that the panel proposed shifting control of sought-after phone records from the government to individual phone companies, while The New York Times said the panel urged the White House to hold a tighter leash on U.S. spying on foreign leaders.

The panel's recommendations come as skepticism over the NSA surveillance mounts in Congress and from technology companies and privacy groups. Worried that reports of foreign data intercepts could drive away international customers, lawyers for a consortium of tech

companies including Google, Microsoft, Apple, Facebook and Yahoo recently urged legal changes in Congress. Their move coincided with a bipartisan legislative push to scale back the [surveillance programs](#).

One lawmaker said the review panel recommendations could aid plans to end the government's direct control over telephone data.



In this Dec. 11, 2013 file photo, National Security Agency (NSA) Director Gen. Keith Alexander testifies on Capitol Hill in Washington. The Obama administration will continue the National Security Agency's surveillance programs and cyber command operations under the direction of a single military commander, the first move in advance of what published reports described Friday as limited changes proposed by a task force that deliberated for months in secrecy. (AP Photo/Manuel Balce Ceneta)

"I'd encourage the administration to move in the direction of phone companies retaining the data," Rep. Adam Schiff, a Democrat, said Friday.

Schiff, a member of the House Intelligence Committee, has offered legislation to shift control of phone records from the NSA to the [phone companies](#) and said the move could be made without diminishing [national security](#). He noted that the firms already hold the same data that the government sweeps up and could quickly turn over that material to the NSA and law enforcement. NSA officials have warned that investigations could bog down if the government lost direct control over the records.

Recent media revelations stemming from leaks from former NSA contractor Edward Snowden showed the agency's dual roles abroad, reporting that the NSA spied on foreign governments and companies alike, using its unique computer hacking abilities to tap into financial and corporate files and the private communications of allies as well as the calling and web patterns of suspected terrorists.

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