

# Tech leaders warn on effects of US snooping fallout

January 22 2014, by Alex Pigman

---



A man speaks on his mobile phone on May 31, 2011 in New York City

Hi-tech bosses on Wednesday demanded authorities change their murky ways in the wake of revelations of a vast snooping campaign by the US and other governments that has raised concerns on privacy.

Just days after President Barack Obama unveiled measures to fight back against accusations of government overreach, executives at the swanky

Davos World Economic Forum said that security demands by state authorities posed a risk to their business.

"It's been the wild wild west around the world," said John T. Chambers, CEO of data systems company Cisco, sitting on a panel discussing the state of the digital world.

"We need to be able to rebuild trust with our users," said Marissa Mayer, the [chief executive](#) of Internet portal Yahoo!.

The warning shots came after a widespread furore over claims by Edward Snowden, the fugitive US contractor now exiled in Russia, that US spies were accessing the data of Internet users around the world, bypassing [privacy laws](#) and national safeguards.

"Trust has suffered not only in the US but also internationally in countries that really have concerns about what the NSA is looking at," Mayer said.

Internet users needed "the ability to understand what type of data we're being asked (to provide authorities) and how that data is going to be used," she said.

Her concerns came just days after US President Barack Obama trimmed the powers of the secretive US eavesdropping agency by calling for new privacy safeguards, but allowed bulk phone data sweeps to continue as an anti-terror tool.



Yahoo CEO Marissa Mayer takes part in the session on the opening day of the World Economic Forum in Davos on January 22, 2014

Privacy watchers called the measures insufficient, but executives in Davos said the dialogue had just begun and new laws that were better consistent with Internet habits were needed.

"It's too murky at the moment," said Gavin Patterson, chief executive of BT Group, the British telecom group. "The legislation and the regulation has to catch up," he said.

Randall Stephenson, boss of US telecom AT&T, said the debate really began after the 2001 US terrorist attacks, when security worries became paramount.

But now the pendulum was swinging back and an equilibrium needed to be found. "There's a balance here," he said.

"And I think the customer really has to have a lot of say of where that pendulum sits."

Obama's proposals were interpreted as a way to find that balance: meeting the demands of civil liberties advocates and the security concerns from the US intelligence community.

But on Tuesday a survey in the US said Obama had failed to reassure most Americans, with three-quarters saying their privacy will not be better protected under the changes.

BT's Patterson said he didn't believe 100 percent privacy was possible because of security concerns.

Transparency was the key for most of the Davos attendees.

Customers and companies "needed the ability to understand what type of data were being asked and how that data is going to be used," Yahoo!'s Mayer said.

She said local authorities in the US already provided some information to Yahoo! on what types of cases their requests for data were used. This policy had to be expanded to the powerful NSC, she said.

Cisco's Chambers called for "rules of the road that everyone can live with especially among countries that are very closely allied, in a veiled reference to allegations that the US also closely spies on its friends.

Citation: Tech leaders warn on effects of US snooping fallout (2014, January 22) retrieved 10 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2014-01-tech-leaders-effects-snooping-fallout.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.