

Judge extends order blocking data destruction

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A federal judge in San Francisco has extended his nationwide order blocking the National Security Agency from destroying telephone surveillance records.

U.S. District Judge Jeffrey White issued a restraining order on March 10 to prevent the National Security Agency from destroying phone records that it had collected more than five years ago.

On Wednesday, White, who is overseeing an invasion-of-privacy lawsuit against the agency, prolonged that order, ruling the records were needed to decide the case.

The San Francisco Chronicle reports (bit.ly/1j9mp67) that the 23 organizations who are plaintiffs in the suit include churches, marijuana advocates and gun owners.

Cindy Cohn of the Electronic Frontier Foundation, the plaintiffs' lawyer, said the records could be destroyed if the government would confirm that the plaintiffs' phone data was collected, but the Justice Department's lawyer, James Gilligan, said that information should remain secret.

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