

Some in NSA warned of a backlash

November 20 2014, by Ken Dilanian



In this June 6, 2013 file photo, a sign stands outside the National Security Agency (NSA) campus in Fort Meade, Md. Years before Edward Snowden sparked a public outcry with the disclosure that the NSA had been secretly collecting American telephone records, some NSA executives voiced strong objections to the program, intelligence officials say, complaining that it exceeded the agency's mandate to focus on foreign spying and would do little to stop terror plots.(AP Photo/Patrick Semansky, File)

Current and former intelligence officials say dissenters within the National Security Agency warned in 2009 that secretly collecting American phone records wasn't providing enough intelligence to justify

the backlash it would cause if revealed.

The Associated Press has learned that the NSA took the concerns seriously and that they sparked an internal debate. In the end, however, NSA leaders as well as White House officials and key lawmakers decided to continue the collection and storage of American calling records.

The warnings proved prophetic last year after the program was made public in the first and most significant leak by a former NSA systems administrator, Edward Snowden. He cited the government's deception about the program as one of his chief motivations for turning over classified documents to journalists.

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