

Spy agencies in 'technology arms race', says British chief

March 31 2015

Spy agencies are caught in a "technology arms race" with terrorists and criminals, the new head of Britain's MI6 said on Monday in his first public comments since becoming chief.

Alex Younger defended the use of data by the Secret Intelligence Service, known as MI6, after the release of documents by former CIA contractor Edward Snowden sparked criticism of sweeping [mass surveillance](#) by [intelligence agencies](#).

"Using data appropriately and proportionately offers us a priceless opportunity to be even more deliberate and targeted in what we do, and so to be better at protecting our agents and this country," Younger said.

"The bad news is the same technology in opposition hands, an opposition often unconstrained by consideration of ethics and law, allows them to see what we are doing and to put our people and agents at risk," he said.

"So we find ourselves in a technology arms race."

He described the threats faced by MI6 as the "dark side of globalisation" including "terrorists, malicious actors in cyberspace and criminals".

The comments were Younger's first since the career spy became chief of Britain's foreign [intelligence](#) service last year, taking the helm of an agency not officially acknowledged by the British government until 1994.

The organisation has emerged from the shadows in recent years to defend itself and restore a reputation tarnished by discredited intelligence used to justify the 2003 invasion of Iraq, and accusations of complicity in torture during the so-called "War on Terror".

Younger said that public trust relied on oversight by parliament's Intelligence and Security Committee, which has been criticised as being ineffectual in reining in the agencies.

"What really distinguishes us from our opponents is that we live by the values of this country and are regulated by its laws, even as we work in secret. This is our vital advantage," Younger said.

"Our staff are asked to make complex decisions in a difficult ethical and legal space. They do so with remarkable assurance. If we make mistakes, we face up to them and learn from them.

"The guiding principle is clear—we cannot protect the values this country represents if we undermine them in the process. And we cannot hope to hold the public's trust unless they know this principle is effectively overseen."

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Citation: Spy agencies in 'technology arms race', says British chief (2015, March 31) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2015-03-spy-agencies-technology-arms-british.html>

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