

Report: Documents reveal details behind AT&T-NSA partnership

August 16 2015



Under a decades-old program with the government, telecom giant AT&T in 2003 led the way on a new collection capability that the National Security Agency said amounted to a "'live' presence on the global net" and would forward 400 billion Internet metadata records in one of its first months of operation, The New York Times reported.

The Fairview program was forwarding more than 1 million emails a day to the NSA's headquarters in Fort Meade, Maryland, the newspaper reported. Meanwhile, the separate Stormbrew program, linked to Verizon and the former company MCI, was still gearing up to use the

new technology, which appeared to process foreign-to-foreign traffic.

In 2011, AT&T began handing over 1.1 billion domestic cellphone calling records a day to the NSA after "a push to get this flow operational prior to the 10th anniversary of 9/11," according to an internal agency newsletter cited by the Times. Intelligence officials have told reporters in the past that, for technical reasons, the effort consisted mostly of landline phone records, the newspaper reported.

The NSA spent \$188.9 million on the Fairview program, twice the amount spent on Stormbrew, its second-largest corporate program, the newspaper reported.

Such details from the decades-long partnership between the government and AT&T emerged from NSA [documents](#) provided by former NSA systems analyst Edward Snowden, the Times reported in a story posted Saturday on its website. The Times and ProPublica jointly reviewed the documents, which date from 2003 to 2013.

While it has been long known that American telecommunications companies worked closely with the spy agency, the newspaper reported, the documents show that the [government's](#) relationship with AT&T has been considered unique and especially productive. One document described it as "highly collaborative," while another lauded the company's "extreme willingness to help," the newspaper reported.

The documents show that AT&T's cooperation has involved a broad range of classified activities, according to the Times. AT&T has given the NSA access, through several methods covered under different legal rules, to billions of emails as they have flowed across its domestic networks.

It also has provided technical assistance in carrying out a secret court

order permitting the wiretapping of all Internet communications at U.N. headquarters, a customer of AT&T, the Times reported. While NSA spying on U.N. diplomats had been previously reported, the newspaper said Saturday that neither the court order nor AT&T's involvement had been disclosed.

The documents also reveal that AT&T installed surveillance equipment in at least 17 of its Internet hubs on American soil, the Times reported, far more than similarly sized competitor Verizon. AT&T engineers were the first to try out new surveillance technologies invented by the NSA, the newspaper reported.

The NSA, AT&T and Verizon declined to discuss the findings from the files, according to the Times. It is not clear if the programs still operate in the same way today, the [newspaper](#) reported.

One of the documents provided by Snowden reminds NSA officials to be polite when visiting AT&T facilities, the Times reported, and notes, "This is a partnership, not a contractual relationship."

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Citation: Report: Documents reveal details behind AT&T-NSA partnership (2015, August 16) retrieved 23 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2015-08-documents-reveal-att-nsa-partnership.html>

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