

# How the NSA Scours Internet Traffic in the U.S.

The National Security Agency gathers information from many sources. Here are three main ones—with a focus on one way it can tap and study Internet traffic.

○ Select red dots for more information

## Data collected from sources

The NSA gets much of its communication information from companies

### Phones

The NSA can gather phone-call data. ○



### Prism

Stored content from Internet firms, aimed at foreign targets. ○



### Internet backbone

Monitors certain streams of Internet traffic, through legal relationships with telecom companies. ○



## Internet data sorted

The NSA filters out the data it needs

### Filtering System

Companies such as Narus make technology that filters large streams of Internet traffic. The system aims at communications where at least one person is overseas.

### NSA Processing

Systems including one called Xkeyscore take 'selectors,' such as email addresses sent by analysts, develop filtering rules and send information back.

### Main databases

Data goes into NSA databases. ○

Information might also go to an analyst for study in real time.

### Query programs

Software for analysts to spot links or patterns in piles of data. ○



### Analyst

Gives instructions to the filtering algorithms, gets information from databases and studies the data.



### Reports

Final reports are stored in databases named Maui and Anchory.



Sources: current and former U.S. and industry officials; documents revealed by Edward Snowden

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