

A brief study on national security agency

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The National Security Agency remains one of the most secretive branches of the United States Intelligence Service. Its main agenda is espionage, and as stated in its Mission, it aims to deliver a “ responsive, reliable, and expert Signals Intelligence and Information Assurance products and services, and enables Network Warfare operations to gain a decisive information advantage for the Nation and our allies under all circumstances” (NSA/CSS, 2009, p. 1).

The National Security Agency assures its citizens, as well the nation itself, of security from threat—both external and internal—through the strict and precise utilization of informations gathering, made either covertly or overtly. Born out of necessity during the late 1940’s, it has grown today to be one of the most controversial, mysterious, expensive, and often times controversial agencies of the modern age. HistoryOn May 20, 1949, the Armed Forces Security Agency, or AFSA, which is considered as the predecessor or the NSA, was established under the command of the Joint Chiefs of Staffs. The original mission was for directing the communications intelligence activities within the military intelligence communities (Richelson ; Evans, 2000, p. 1). The NSA was created as a result of a memo sent by Walter Bedell Smith, in December of 1951, to the Executive Secretary of the National Security Council, James B.

Lay, proposing that the Communications Intelligence had proven inefficient, and had proposed an investigation on communications intelligence activities (Richelson ; Evans, 2000, p. 1). After the investigation, also known as Brownell Committee Report, named after Committee Chairman Herbert Brownell, was completed in June of 1952, it found that there is a need for a
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much greater degree of direction on a national level on communications intelligence. Thus, AFSA would no longer be limited to military operations, but as the new name would imply, NSA would be national in its scope of operations and influence. National Security Council's document 2b, dated December 1952, had clearly stated that from a military scope of operations, encompassing the three services, it has developed into a unified national activity; as was the first sentence of the directive went, "The communications intelligence, or COMINT, activities of the United States are a national responsibility" (Richelson & Evans, 2000, p.

1). Today, NSA's strategic plans are of four aspects: first, to dominate global cryptology; second, to secure national security systems; third, to connect people, sensors, systems, and information on a global scale; and to leverage our unique relationship with government, industry, academia, and foreign partners (NSA/CCS, 2009, p. 1). Taking this into account, the National Security Agency sets for itself four major goals in which to base their actions with respect to their dealings with the American nation and its allies: The first goal is Mission—it aims to deliver a responsive, reliable, and effective Signals Intelligence and Information Assurance, and enable Network Warfare operations, for National Security under all circumstances (NSA/CSS, 2009, p. 1). Next goal is Transformation—it aims to achieve global network dominance through the development and deployment of a new generation of globally distributed active and passive cryptologic capabilities (NSA/CSS, 2009, p.

1). The third goal is People—it aims to enhance an expert workforce to meet global cryptologic challenges (NSA/CSS, 2009, p. 1); and lastly, goal number <https://assignbuster.com/a-brief-study-on-national-security-agency/>

four is Business Practice—it aims to create and integrate effective and efficient business management practices within the enterprise and with stakeholders (NSA/CSS, 2009, p. 1).; Public Apprehension Since the technological superiority of the NSA deals with communications and surveillance systems, certain groups and individuals are cautious that this would lead to unconstitutional infringements regarding an individual, group, or an organization's privacy.

This apprehension would seem to be with basis, especially since the NSA have been criticized in the past for having a global surveillance network capable of conducting espionage, thus invading individual's privacy, in whatever country, weather, and in whatever time of the day (Richelson ; Evans, 2000, p. 1). In its defense, NSA Director General Lt. General Michael V. Hayden stresses in the year 2000, that although the NSA provides for the government hosts of vital intelligence information on issues covering drug trafficking, international terrorism, and the proliferation of WMD's, or weapons of mass destruction, NSA's surveillance activities are also subject for investigation under various sectors of the three branches of the government (Hayden, 2000, p.

1). He also stressed that the recent controversies and the accusations made in the media concerning NSA recently, which involves the agency's collection of all electronic communications in the United States, conducting espionage on American citizens, and the forwarding of classified intelligence to American companies as baseless and false (Hayden, 2000, p. 2). General Hayden reiterates that NSA's electronic surveillance authority is within the parameters of the constitution, as was stated in his paper, that, " Executive <https://assignbuster.com/a-brief-study-on-national-security-agency/>

Order 12333, entitled Intelligence Activities, empowers the agency to collect, process, and disseminate signals intelligence information for national foreign intelligence purposes and in support of U. S.

military operations” (Hayden, 2000, p. 2). This E. O., which authorizes the agency to collect information solely for foreign purposes, and to forward it to the respective government agencies, does not allow NSA to provide classified information to any private U. S.

company, as was being strongly accused in, and by, the media.

Furthermore, as was strongly stated by Gen. Hayden, under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, or FISA, NSA is allowed only to conduct communications espionage to an individual in the United States only after a federal judge finds reason to believe that that individual is an agent of a foreign government (Hayden, 2000, p. 2). In this circumstance, a federal judge may find that an individual in the U. S.

is a foreign agent if the said individual is found to be a spy, terrorist, or if he extends aids in the same manner in any way. In cases where NSA needs to gather information on an individual in the U. S., NSA does not reveal that person’s identity, unless it would be judged as vital in understanding a particular foreign intelligence or its importance to national security. In the same manner, as explained by Gen.

Hayden, no information regarding that person may be retained by the agency, unless it too is deemed as vital in understanding a particular foreign intelligence, in cases as such, these information will be forwarded to the corresponding appropriate government agency (Hayden, 2000, p. 5). An <https://assignbuster.com/a-brief-study-on-national-security-agency/>

example of this instance would be, if NSA intercepts vital information of a planned terrorist attack on American soil, the identity of that person in the U. S. would be retained then forwarded to the proper authorities. Conclusion In achieving its mission, NSA continuously deals with information that must stay classified in order to gather further intelligence information on subjects.

But the principles of our democratic system dictate that its society must be well-informed of the topics concerning the nation. Perhaps America should feel secured that the power entrusted to NSA is being handled responsibly, with the many guidelines enveloped in our oversight framework, and for this, this powers will never be abused. References: Hayden, M. (2000, April 12). Statement for the record of NSA Director Lt.

General Michael V. Hayden, USAF. House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence. Retrieved July 20, 2009, from

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