

# US officials help NSA spy on 35 world leaders

[More leaked documents show that the NSA spied on over 35 world leaders with the help of US officials.](#)

- Agency given more than 200 numbers by government official
- NSA encourages departments to share their 'Rolodexes'
- Surveillance produced 'little intelligence', memo acknowledges

The National Security Agency monitored the phone conversations of 35 world leaders after being given the numbers by an official in another US government department, according to a classified document provided by whistleblower Edward Snowden.

The confidential memo reveals that the [NSA](#) encourages senior officials in its "customer" departments, such the White House, State and the Pentagon, to share their "Rolodexes" so the agency can add the phone numbers of leading foreign politicians to their [surveillance](#) systems.

The document notes that one unnamed US official handed over 200 numbers, including those of the 35 world leaders, none of whom is named. These were immediately "tasked" for monitoring by the NSA.

The revelation is set to add to mounting diplomatic tensions between the US and its allies, after the German chancellor [Angela Merkel](#) on Wednesday [accused the US of tapping her mobile phone.](#)

After Merkel's allegations became public, White House press secretary Jay Carney issued a statement that said the US "is not monitoring and will not monitor" the German chancellor's communications. But that failed to quell the row, as

officials in Berlin quickly pointed out that the US did not deny monitoring the phone in the past.

The NSA memo obtained by the Guardian suggests that such surveillance was not isolated, as the agency routinely monitors the phone numbers of world leaders – and even asks for the assistance of other US officials to do so.

The memo, dated October 2006 and which was issued to staff in the agency's Signals Intelligence Directorate (SID), was titled "Customers Can Help SID Obtain Targetable Phone Numbers".

Earlier in the week, Obama [called the French president François Hollande](#) in response to reports in Le Monde that the NSA accessed more than 70m phone records of French citizens in a single 30-day period, while earlier reports in Der Spiegel uncovered NSA activity against the offices and [communications of senior officials of the European Union](#).

The [European Commission](#), the executive body of the EU, this week backed proposals that [could require US tech companies to seek permission](#) before handing over EU citizens' data to US intelligence agencies, while the European parliament voted in favour of [suspending a transatlantic bank data sharing agreement](#) after Der Spiegel revealed the agency was monitoring the international bank transfer system Swift.

Obviously this can be damaging for the reputation of the US abroad. Since World War 2, much of the world has looked to the US as a leader of freedom, especially considering the Soviet-bloc mostly lived behind an 'iron curtain' controlled by governments. During this time the US developed an international spy network, and as technology evolved, so did the network. But the cold war is over, and the US has few enemies. This begs the question of the necessity of such an asparagus, especially since many of the revelations of spying have been on US allies such as Germany and France.

# Further Reading

Le Monde has revealed that the NSA gathered [more than 70 million French phone calls in a single month](#).

Top financial experts say that the NSA and other intelligence agencies are also using the information to [profit from this inside information](#). And the NSA wants to [ramp up its spying on Wall Street](#) ... to “protect” it.