

Intel Chief:

U.S. Spies On Allies, They Do It, Too

BY LARA JAKES
AND JULIE PACE

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Facing lawmakers who suggested U.S. surveillance has gone too far, the national intelligence director on Tuesday defended spying on foreign allies as necessary and said such scrutiny of America's friends — and vice versa — is commonplace.

Another top intelligence official said the collection of phone records that prompted outrage across the Atlantic actually was conducted with the help of European governments. News reports that the National Security Agency had swept up millions of phone records in France, Spain and elsewhere were inaccurate and reflected a misunderstanding of “metadata” that was in fact collected by NATO allies and shared with the United States, the director of the NSA told a congressional hearing.

The nation's post-Sept. 11 surveillance programs are coming under increased criticism at home and abroad, capped by recent revelations that the NSA monitored German Chancellor Angela Merkel's cellphone and those of up to 34 other world leaders. Those reports relied on documents provided by former NSA analyst Edward Snowden.

Congressional leaders who have been staunch supporters of the NSA programs are now saying it is time for a close examination. The White House said Tuesday that President Barack Obama had ordered a full review of the programs and was considering changes.

National Intelligence Director James Clapper defended the secret surveillance that sweeps up phone records and emails of millions of Americans as vital to protecting against terrorists.

He played down European allies' complaints about spying on their leaders, saying



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From left, Deputy Director of the National Security Agency Chris Inglis, Director of the National Security Agency Gen. Keith Alexander, Director of National Intelligence James Clapper, and Deputy Attorney General James Cole testify during a hearing before the House (Select) Intelligence Committee Tuesday, on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC.

the allies do it, too.

“That’s a hardy perennial,” Clapper told a House intelligence committee hearing.

He said during his 50 years working in intelligence it was “a basic tenet” to collect, whether by spying on communications or through other sources, confidential information about foreign leaders that reveals “if what they’re saying gels with what’s actually going on.”

Committee Chairman Mike Rogers asked whether allies had conducted the same type of espionage against U.S. leaders. “Absolutely,” Clapper responded.

Asked about collection of foreign phone records, the NSA’s director, Gen. Keith Alexander, testified that the U.S. did not collect European records alone, as was reported over the past week to an outcry of criticism across Europe.

Alexander said the U.S. was given data by NATO partners, often collected from elsewhere around the world, as part of a program to protect military interests. He disputed that the program targeted European citizens, but did not offer specifics. He called the reports “completely false.”

As for efforts at home, the intelligence leaders defended sweeping up records of U.S. phone calls as necessary to combat terrorism. The Obama administration

vigorously opposes efforts to curtail the internal spying programs that have angered some Americans.

Rogers urged lawmakers not to scrap an important investigative tool.

“We can’t ask the FBI to find terrorists plotting an attack and then not provide them with the information they need,” he said.

A bipartisan plan introduced Tuesday would end the NSA’s sweep of phone records, allowing the government to seek only records related to ongoing terror investigations. Critics both at home and abroad have criticized the current program as a violation of privacy rights.

White House press secretary Jay Carney declined to take a position on the legislation, put forward by Rep. James Sensenbrenner, R-Wis., and Senate Judiciary Chairman Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., with a broad array of support. Carney said the administration is working with Congress on “appropriate reforms.”

Asked about the reports of eavesdropping on world leaders, Obama himself said in a Fusion network television interview that the U.S. government is conducting “a complete review of how our intelligence operates outside the country.” He declined to discuss specifics or say when he learned about the spying on allies.

Another U.S. official said

Obama did not know the NSA was monitoring Merkel’s communications until after his visit to Germany in June. That official said information about the surveillance of foreign leaders emerged in the course of the White House’s broader review of spying programs, triggered by media reports based on documents leaked by Snowden. The official was not authorized to discuss the matter by name and insisted on anonymity.

The White House says the United States isn’t currently listening to Merkel’s conversations and won’t do so in the future. Press secretary Carney wouldn’t say whether the U.S. is monitoring the calls of other friendly leaders or whether Obama thinks that sort of surveillance of allies should go on.

In rare agreement, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., and House Speaker John Boehner, R-Ohio, both said Tuesday that it was time for a thorough review of NSA programs.

Both have been strong supporters of the programs.

Sen. Dianne Feinstein, chairwoman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, called for a “total review of all intelligence programs” following the Merkel allegations.

Several longtime allies have joined Germany in expressing their displeasure about spying on their leaders.

Spain’s prosecutor’s office said Tuesday it had opened a preliminary inquiry to determine whether a crime was committed by NSA surveillance. French President Francois Hollande said the United States should not be eavesdropping on its allies but that U.S. officials were cooperating with Europe to fix the problem.

Belgian Prime Minister Elio Di Rupo’s office on Tuesday confirmed a report in De Standard that at his most sensitive meetings the premier now is asking government ministers to leave their mobile phones outside the room.

Obama Blames Cancellations On Insurers

WASHINGTON (AP) — Move over, website woes. Lawmakers confronted the Obama administration Tuesday with a difficult new health care problem — a wave of cancellation notices hitting small businesses and individuals who buy their own insurance.

At the same time, the federal official closest to the website apologized for its dysfunction in new sign-ups and asserted things are getting better by the day.

Medicare chief Marilyn Tavenner said it’s not the administration but insurers who are responsible for cancellation letters now reaching many of the estimated 14 million people who buy individual policies. And, officials said, people who get cancellation notices will be able to find better replacement plans, in some cases for less.

The Associated Press, citing the National Association of Insurance Commissioners, reported in May that many carriers would opt to cancel policies this fall and issue new ones. Administratively that was seen as easier than changing existing plans to comply with the new law, which mandates coverage of more services and provides better financial protection against catastrophic illnesses.

While the administration had ample warning of the cancellations, they could become another public relations debacle for President Barack Obama’s signature legislation. This problem goes to the credibility of one of the president’s earliest promises about the health care overhaul: You can keep your plan if you like it.

U.N. Confirms Syrian Polio Outbreak

DAMASCUS, Syria (AP) — The U.N. confirmed an outbreak of polio in Syria for the first time in over a decade on Tuesday, warning the disease threatens to spread among an estimated half-million children who have never been immunized because of the civil war.

The aid group Save the Children urged a “vaccination cease-fire” to try to prevent an epidemic of the highly contagious disease.

Meanwhile, hopes for a negotiated settlement to the three-year conflict appeared ever more distant as Syria’s President Bashar Assad sacked a deputy prime minister for meeting Western officials to discuss the possibility of holding a peace conference — the latest blow to diplomatic efforts to bring the country’s warring parties to the negotiating table.

At least 10 cases of polio among babies and toddlers were confirmed in northeastern Syria, the World Health Organization said — the first outbreak of the crippling disease in 14 years. Nearly all Syrian children were vaccinated against polio before the civil war began.

WHO spokesman Oliver Rosenbauer said the U.N. agency was awaiting lab results on another 12 suspected cases, mostly children under 2.

Survivors Mark Sandy’s Anniversary

NEW YORK (AP) — For some, it’s something to mark — a year of recovery and rebuilding since Superstorm Sandy walloped the region — homes that have been restored, pride in the resiliency of people and neighborhoods.

But for others, there’s still a long road ahead and much work to be done. And for those who lost loved ones, the grief remains.

Sandy came ashore on Oct. 29, 2012, sending floodwaters pouring across the densely populated barrier islands of Long Island and the Jersey shore. In New York City, the storm surge hit nearly 14 feet, swamping the city’s subway and commuter rail tunnels and knocking out power to the southern third of Manhattan.

The storm was blamed for at least 182 deaths in the U.S. — including 68 in New York and 71 in New Jersey — and property damage estimated at \$65 billion.

Police Focus On Uighurs After Tianamen Car Attack

BY CHRISTOPHER BODEEN

Associated Press

BEIJING — Chinese police were seeking information Tuesday on two ethnic Uighur suspects believed linked to an apparent suicide car attack near Tiananmen Square in the country’s capital that killed five people and injured 38.

Police released no word about a possible motive for Monday’s incident at Beijing’s Forbidden City, one of China’s most politically sensitive and heavily guarded public spaces. But investigators sent a notice to hotels in the city aimed at tracing the movements of two suspects, and possibly at uncovering any other conspirators.

It was unclear whether the two Uighurs were believed to have perished in the car or were still at large, and whether they may have been linked to militant groups in the western region of Xinjiang, where radicals have been fighting a low-intensity insurgency against Chinese rule for years.

If Monday’s incident was such an attack, it would be the first in recent history outside of Xinjiang, and the boldest and most ambitious given the high-profile target.

The sports utility vehicle veered inside a barrier separating a crowded sidewalk from a busy avenue and then plowed through pedestrians as it sped toward Tiananmen Gate, where it crashed into a stone structure near a large portrait of Mao Zedong which hangs near the entrance to the former imperial palace.

The vehicle’s three occupants were killed along with two bystanders, including a Filipino woman. The 38 injured included three other Filipinos and a Japanese man, police said.

The gate stands opposite

sprawling Tiananmen Square, which was the focus of the 1989 pro-democracy movement that was violently suppressed by the military, and any incident there is highly sensitive.

If intended as a political statement, Monday’s attack could hardly have picked a more significant target. Just west of the square lies the Great Hall of the People, the seat of China’s parliament, while many of China’s top leaders live and work just a few hundred meters (yards) away in the tightly guarded Zhongnanhai compound.

Xinjiang is home to largely Muslim ethnic Uighurs, who are culturally, religiously and linguistically distinct from China’s ethnic Han majority. Many have chafed under heavy-handed Communist Party rule.

Zhao Fuzhou, a security official at Beijing’s Xinjiang Dasha hotel, said police had circulated a notice seeking information about two suspects with Uighur names in the aftermath of Monday’s incident. A clerk at the Hubei Mansion hotel also confirmed receiving the notice, while employees at

other hotels said they’d been told not to discuss the matter.

The notice asked hotels about the two suspects, and to report any suspicious guests or vehicles registered with their establishments going back to Oct. 1. One of the men, identified in the notice as Yusupu Wumaierniyazi, was listed as living in a town in the northwestern Uighur homeland of Xinjiang in which 24 police and civilians and 13 militants were killed in an attack on June 26.

Beijing police referred reporters’ questions to a spokesman whose phone rang unanswered.

In Xinjiang this year, dozens of people have been killed in clashes between security forces and Uighur militants, who the government says have been inspired by global jihadist teachings and joined al-Qaeda-inspired fighters in Syria.

China has provided little direct evidence to back up those claims. However, Xinjiang borders Afghanistan and unstable Central Asian states where militant Islamic violence is a regular occurrence and Uighurs are believed to be

among the militants sheltering in Pakistan’s lawless northwestern region.

Authorities had earlier warned that extremists were planning attacks outside the Xinjiang region. A smothering security blanket has made organization difficult for the extremists, denied them safe havens, and severely limited their access to firearms and explosives.

Monday’s incident had every appearance of being deliberate, since the driver apparently jumped a curb and traveled about 400 meters (yards) to the spot where the car was said to have caught fire. Along the way, it avoided trees, street lights and at least one security checkpoint. The attackers also struck during the lunch hour when security would have likely been relatively slack.

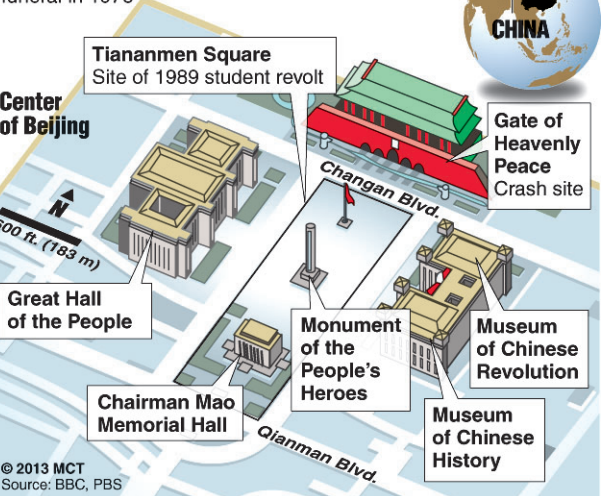
Witnesses quoted in Chinese media said the SUV’s driver honked his horn as he drove along the sidewalk, suggesting mass murder was not the intention. Photos showed flames licking the vehicle and a huge cloud of smoke, although there was no word on whether an incendiary device

Tiananmen Square

At least five people died and dozens injured after a vehicle crashed in Beijing’s Tiananmen Square, near the Forbidden City.

About the square

- Built in 1420s when emperor of Ming Dynasty moved capital to Beijing
- Covers 99 acres (40 hectares); more than 1 million people filled the square for Mao Tse-tung’s funeral in 1976



had been activated or shots fired.

“The vehicle ran very fast, I could hear people screaming all the way while the vehicle

ploughed through the crowds,” the *Global Times* newspaper quoted an unidentified female witness as saying.



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