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## **NSA reportedly tapped Americans' calls, even phone sex**

**By Los Angeles Times and McClatchy Newspapers**

WASHINGTON — U.S. intelligence analysts routinely eavesdropped on personal calls of U.S. military personnel, journalists and aid workers overseas and their families back home, according to military linguists involved in U.S. surveillance programs.

Analysts with the supersecret National Security Agency (NSA) reportedly shared some intercepts of highly personal conversations, including phone sex.

If the accusations are true, they could reignite controversy over the administration's post-Sept. 11 eavesdropping operations and its efforts to collect vast quantities of data about Americans' tax, medical and travel records; credit-card purchases; e-mails; and other information.

The accounts are the most detailed to date to challenge the assertions of President Bush, CIA Director Michael Hayden and other administration officials that the United States' overseas-wiretapping activities have been carefully monitored to prevent abuse and invasion of U.S. citizens' privacy.

Bush and other senior officials repeatedly said that after the Sept. 11 attacks, the NSA only monitored the private communications of Americans suspected of links to al-Qaida or other terrorist groups without court orders.

The accusations follow the release Tuesday of a study by a government-advisory group that questions how useful communications intercepts and another techniques are at ferreting out terrorist plots.

"The information sought by analysts must be filtered out of the huge quantity of data available [the needle in the haystack problem]," says the 2-year, 352-page study by the National Research Council for the Department of Homeland Security.

"Even under the pressure of threats as serious as terrorism, the privacy rights and civil liberties that are the cherished core values of our nation must not be destroyed," the report warns.

Describing the accusations as "extremely disturbing," Sen. Jay Rockefeller, D-W.Va., chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, said the panel had started an inquiry and requested records from the Bush administration.

The linguists said that recordings of intimate conversations between U.S. citizens and their loved ones were sometimes passed around, out of prurient interest, among analysts at an electronic-surveillance facility at Fort Gordon, Ga.

They also said they were encouraged to continue monitoring calls of aid workers and other personnel stationed in the Middle East even after it was clear the callers had no ties to terrorists or posed any threat to U.S. interests.

"There were people who called the states to talk to their families," said Adrienne Kinne, 31, a former Arab linguist in the Army Reserves who worked at a National Security Agency (NSA) facility at Fort Gordon from 2001 to 2003.

"We identified phone numbers belonging to nonthreatening groups, including the Red Cross," she said in an interview. "We could have blocked their numbers, but we didn't, and we were told to listen to them just in case."

Kinne's accounts were echoed by a former Navy linguist, David Murfee Faulk, 39, who worked at the same facility from 2003 to 2007 and said the government routinely monitored conversations between U.S. troops in Iraq and their spouses or loved ones.

"I observed people writing down, word for word, very embarrassing conversations," Faulk said. "People would say, 'Hey, check this out; you're not going to believe what I heard.' "

Their claims were initially reported Thursday by ABC News.

"Calling home to the United States, talking to their spouses, sometimes their girlfriends, sometimes one phone call following another," Faulk told ABC.

The intercept operators shared recordings of salacious conversations and "phone sex" between U.S. military personnel and their wives or girlfriends, added Faulk, who worked until recently as a reporter for a newspaper in Augusta, Ga.

He said he felt guilty about what they were doing. "I feel that it was something that the people should not have done. Including me."

Kinne first spoke publicly about the reported monitoring of U.S. journalists and aid workers in Iraq on the independent radio program "Democracy Now!" in May.

"These were just really everyday, average, ordinary Americans who happened to be in the Middle East, in our area of intercept and happened to be making these phone calls on satellite phones," Kinne told ABC, describing the calls as "personal, private things with Americans who are not in any way, shape or form associated with anything to do with terrorism."

Both linguists, who didn't know each other, said their superiors rebuffed questions about the monitoring of U.S. citizens' private conversations.

Kinne, who now works at a veterans hospital in Vermont and has joined a veterans' anti-war group, said "collecting" the calls of innocent Americans hobbled the NSA's ability to find genuine terrorism-related material among vast amounts of useless data.

"By casting the net so wide ... it's harder to find that piece of information that might actually be useful to somebody," she said. "You're actually hurting our ability to effectively protect our national security."

The Bush administration's overseas-wiretapping program has been a source of controversy since it was disclosed in December 2005 that Bush had secretly authorized the NSA to override existing laws and begin monitoring the international phone calls and e-mails of U.S. residents.

Critics, including some members of Congress, described the eavesdropping as a violation of laws passed in the 1970s that required court warrants before communications of U.S. residents could be monitored.

Bush and Hayden, who headed the NSA from 1999 to 2005, repeatedly defended the legality of the program, characterizing it as a carefully targeted operation.

"We're going after very specific communications that our professional judgment tells us we have reason to believe are those associated with people who want to kill Americans," Hayden said in 2006.

It is not clear whether the abuses reported by Kinne and Faulk occurred as part of the Terrorist Surveillance Program authorized by Bush after the Sept. 11 attacks or were tied to more narrow military-intelligence operations focused on protecting U.S. forces.

An NSA spokesman said the agency "takes its legal responsibility seriously" and operates "in strict accordance with U.S. laws and regulations and with the highest standards of integrity and lawful action."

"Some of these allegations have been investigated and found to be unsubstantiated," the NSA spokesman said. "Others are in the investigation process."

A U.S. intelligence official who requested anonymity said the inspectors general at the Army and the NSA had investigated Kinne's allegations and "were not able to substantiate them."

Kinne and Faulk described working at Fort Gordon where rows of linguists and analysts wearing headphones comb through intercepts collected from all over the world, transcribing the recordings into English. Fort Gordon is one of three military facilities in the United States — the others are in Texas and Hawaii — dedicated to "signals" intelligence analysis.