

No Place to Hide – Big Brother Surveillance Spreads Worldwide

October 06, 2014 | [Tom Olago](#)



Chances are that as you go about your day to day life and business, you may be under much more surveillance than you would imagine to be reasonable or appropriate. It is increasingly coming to light that surveillance systems that are visibly or clandestinely monitoring us are but a tip in the iceberg of secret surveillance monitoring systems across North America and throughout the world. Such surveillance normally focuses on the use of surveillance cameras, monitoring of social media accounts and tracking of cell phone conversations and text messages.

One may argue that such systems should of necessity be secret and clandestine to be most effective in preventing, detecting and limiting crime. However indications are that usage of such systems often exceed authorized boundaries and facilitate unnecessary violations of privacy. The bone of contention is that there doesn't seem to be adequate supervision or control of such potential breaches. Some fairly recent examples include the following reported recently in [Biometric.com](#):

- Boston surreptitiously spied and used facial recognition on concertgoers last year at the Boston Calling Music Festival in 2013. The system captured facial images of thousands of event attendees using more than 10 cameras. Utilizing intelligent video analysis, the system allowed the Boston Police to review over 50 hours of security footage. While the system utilized the city's existing security camera infrastructure, the city did not inform its residents in a timely manner that they would be subjected to system testing. More than a year later, city officials only disclosed the test when exposed by excellent, local investigative journalism.
- In 2013, Canadians only learned after a special investigation that government agencies had been collecting personal information about citizens from social networking sites without a justified legal reason.
- Early 2014, it was revealed that Canada's electronic spy agency used data from a free Internet Wi-Fi service at the country's busiest international airport, Toronto-Pearson, to track the wireless devices of thousands of ordinary air travelers "for days after they left the airport". These secretive spy programs have caused so much concern that Canadian academics and civil liberties organizations banded together to issue a statement against government mass surveillance.
- The Guardian and The Washington Post reported that the National Security Agency (NSA) operates a classified program entitled "PRISM" that enables U.S. intelligence services to directly access servers operated by Google, Facebook, Apple and other Internet giants. The "PRISM" disclosures came from documents leaked by whistleblower Edward Snowden.
- Early 2014, the U.S. government declassified documents that also demonstrated that the NSA was illegally collecting a broad range of domestic electronic intelligence on Americans. The NSA had developed the capacity to monitor as much as 75 percent of all U.S. Web traffic and has admitted that its network monitoring has touched 1.6 percent of the world's Internet data.

Indications are that these trends are by no means confined to, or even concentrated in North America. In Australia for instance...

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