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Following Report That U.S. Trade Representative Asked NSA for Spying Help, Trade Policy Advocates Ask if They're Being Spied On

Letter Asks NSA and USTR to Disclose Surveillance

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Organizations working to influence U.S. trade policy are seeking assurances that they are not being spied on by the National Security Agency (NSA) or other national security agencies. In a letter sent today to NSA Director Keith Alexander and U.S. Trade Representative Michael Froman, more than three dozen advocacy organizations seek assurances that “their operations are not under surveillance by U.S. government agencies.”

The letter follows a [Nov. 3 revelation by *The New York Times*](#) that wide-reaching efforts by the NSA to collect data are driven in part by the agency’s “customers” – a range of other government agencies that includes the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR), the *Times* report said.

“Organizations of U.S. citizens have a right to know that their government is not spying on them as they work to influence U.S. policy,” said Public Citizen President Robert Weissman. “This is something we all should be able to take for granted, but it’s plain now that we can’t.”

Signers of the letter include: the Coalition for Sensible Safeguards, Friends of the Earth, Communication Workers of America, Electronic Frontier Foundation, Organic Consumers Association, American Medical Student Association and Consumer Federation of America.

The groups’ letter asks the NSA and USTR to disclose whether any U.S. groups or individuals aiming to influence trade policy are under surveillance, regardless of whether such surveillance occurred within U.S. borders.

Controversy over NSA surveillance of European political leaders has cast a shadow over negotiations in Brussels this week of the Trans-Atlantic Free Trade Agreement (TAFTA), also known as the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). Complicating matters still further are disputes between the United States and the European Union over data privacy protections that could be weakened by the agreement.

“The U.S. digital giants – including Google, Facebook and Yahoo – want the U.S. Trade Representative to help them become powerful commercial versions of the NSA,” said Jeff Chester of the Center for Digital Democracy. “Americans must be assured that the administration



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won't trade away their privacy rights to help expand the information collected by the NSA and U.S. data companies.”

The letter and a complete list of signers is available at <http://www.citizen.org/documents/cso-letter-on-nsa-surveillance-11-12-13.pdf>.

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