



## Declassified Documents Claim CIA Secretly Collected Americans' Private Data

### Description

Two Democratic U.S. Senators on Thursday accused the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) of collecting Americans' private data without official oversight meant to protect against civil liberties violations.

Democratic Oregon Sen. Ron Wyden and Democratic New Mexico Sen. Martin Heinrich wrote a [letter](#) in April 2021 demanding CIA director William J. Burns and the U.S. Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines declassify a study into the CIA's secret procedure for gathering data on U.S. citizens, [according](#) to a joint press release.

BREAKING: Newly declassified documents reveal that the CIA has been secretly conducting massive surveillance programs that capture Americans' private information.

— ACLU (@ACLU) [February 11, 2022](#)

The CIA's Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board (PCLOB) [commissioned](#) the study to "conduct in-depth examinations" of the data collection process, according to the declassified [report](#).

The PCLOB is an independent agency within the executive branch created to ensure intelligence agencies don't violate Americans' privacy and civil liberties while collecting data during terrorism investigations, [explained](#) the study's report.

The Senators accuse the CIA of working "outside the statutory framework that Congress and the public believe govern this collection, and without any of the judicial, congressional, or even executive branch oversight that comes from FISA [[Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act](#)] collection," according to their press release.

Although the April 2021 letter written by the Senators and the documents released by the CIA were redacted, the unmasked information demonstrated “serious problems associated with warrantless backdoor searches of Americans,” Senators Wyden and Heinrich said. ([RELATED: CIA Covered Up Staff Sex Crimes Committed Against Minors](#))

“While we appreciate the release of the ‘Recommendations from PCLOB Staff’ which highlights problems associated with the handling of Americans’ information, our letter also stressed that the public deserves to know more about the collection of this information,” Wyden and Heinrich said in their press release.

The Senators warned in their press release that the PCLOB report substantiates concerns about how the CIA collects and handles U.S. citizens’ data outside the FISA law, which [requires](#) congressional and judicial oversight.

Despite protections against U.S. intelligence agencies acting to collect Americans’ records without warrants, the CIA has “secretly conducted its own bulk program,” according to the press release.

These reports raise serious questions about what information of ours the CIA is vacuuming up in bulk and how the agency exploits that information to spy on Americans.

This invasion of our privacy must stop.

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The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), a non-profit civil legal and advocacy organization, decried the CIA’s massive surveillance programs, according to a statement.

“These reports raise serious questions about what information of ours the CIA is vacuuming up in bulk and how the agency exploits that information to spy on Americans,” the ACLU wrote on Twitter. “This invasion of our privacy must stop.”

by Mary Rooke

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