

5 YEARS OF DATA NOT COLLECTED BY NSA

Just days after General Keith Alexander successfully dodged questions about the NSA's massive new data storage facility by disclaiming any responsibility for collecting US person data, the National Counterterrorism Center is preparing to extend how long they can retain US person data to 5 years.

The Justice Department is close to approving guidelines that would allow the intelligence community to lengthen the period of time it retains information about U.S. residents, even if they have no known connection to terrorism.

Senior U.S. officials familiar with the guidelines said the changes would allow the National Counterterrorism Center, the intelligence community's clearinghouse for counterterrorism data, to keep such information for up to five years.

Currently, the center must promptly destroy any information about U.S. citizens or residents unless a connection to terrorism is evident.

I guess if you've got all that data storage space in UT, you're going to need something to fill it with.

To justify this power grab, the WaPo's sources point to two attacks that had nothing to do with the length of data retention: the Nidal Hasan attack, in which information on his conversations with Anwar al-Awlaki hadn't been shared throughout the government, and Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, in which his suspect status hadn't been loaded into the no-fly list.

They don't, however, point to a concrete example

where 5 year old data of US persons might have helped solve an actual terror attack.

But thanks to this measure pushed through in almost complete secrecy, when they declare—say—your Church a terrorist organization in three year's time, they'll have records of your association with it in a database in UT.

Update: Here's Charlie Savage on this. Here's the new guidelines. And here's the guidelines they replaced. I'll come back to these later.