

CITING A CULTURE OF “VERIFIED TRUST,” DEFCON ASKS FEDS NOT TO COME

Even after I wrote this post, few people following the NSA story seem to get that James Clapper’s lie to Ron Wyden was just the culmination of a seven month effort on Wyden’s part to get Keith Alexander to correct two misleading statements he made in an unclassified forum at DefCon last year.

That is, when Wyden asked Clapper “Does the NSA collect any type of data at all on ‘millions or hundreds of millions of Americans’?,” he was trying to correct Alexander’s dodge – by way of introducing the notion of “dossiers” – that the NSA doesn’t collect information on all Americans.

Which we now know, thanks to Edward Snowden’s leaks, it does.

So I’m not surprised that – a year after Alexander made lies that have now been exposed as such – DefCon has asked the Feds not to come. (h/t Brian Krebs)

***FEDS, WE NEED
SOME TIME APART.***

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For over two decades DEF CON has been an open nexus of hacker culture, a place where seasoned pros, hackers, academics, and feds can meet, share ideas and party on neutral territory. **Our community operates in the spirit of openness, verified trust, and mutual respect.**

When it comes to sharing and socializing with feds, recent revelations have made

many in the community uncomfortable about this relationship. Therefore, I think it would be best for everyone involved if the feds call a "time-out" and not attend DEF CON this year.

This will give everybody time to think about how we got here, and what comes next. [my emphasis]

The other content of Snowden's leaks aside, the Verizon order and the minimization procedures show that what Alexander did last year was dress up in a hacker costume and lie – not just about the degree to which NSA collects the contacts of all Americans (the lie Ron Wyden worked so hard to correct), but also about the protections offered to people who encrypt their communications (that is, hackers).

As such, any chill between the Feds and hackers should not be laid at Snowden's feet. They should be laid at General Alexander's.