



INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY COMMITTEE OF PARLIAMENT



PRESS RELEASE

The Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament has today announced further details of its review of the legislative framework governing the intelligence agencies' access to private information, and the broader inquiry to examine the appropriate balance between privacy and security in an internet age.

The Chairman of the ISC, the Rt. Hon. Sir Malcolm Rifkind MP, has said:

“The Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament announced – as part of its statement on PRISM, issued in July - its intention to do further work on the legislation which governs the security and intelligence agencies' access to the content of private communications, including to determine whether the relevant Acts of Parliament are still ‘fit for purpose’ given the developments in information technology since they were enacted.

In recent months concern has been expressed at the suggested extent of the capabilities available to the intelligence agencies and the impact upon people's privacy as the agencies seek to find the needles in the haystacks that might be crucial to safeguarding national security. There is a balance to be found between our individual right to privacy and our collective right to security. An informed and responsible debate is needed. The Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament has therefore decided to broaden the scope of its forthcoming inquiry to consider these wider questions, in addition to those relating to the existing legislative framework.

In addition to the classified information that only the ISC has access to, the Committee will also be inviting written evidence more broadly, including from the public, to ensure that the Committee can consider the full range of opinions expressed on these topics. Once it has considered those written submissions it will also hold oral evidence sessions, some of which it expects to hold in public.

The Committee is currently focussed on its detailed investigation into the security and intelligence agencies' actions in relation to those suspected of murdering Drummer Lee Rigby in Woolwich. It will provide further details in relation to the inquiry announced today in due course.”

NOTES TO EDITORS:

1. On 17 July 2013, the ISC issued a statement regarding GCHQ's alleged interception of communications under the US PRISM programme. The full statement can be accessed at the <http://isc.independent.gov.uk/news-archive/17july2013>. The statement concluded:

- *It has been alleged that GCHQ circumvented UK law by using the NSA's PRISM programme to access the content of private communications. From the evidence we have seen, we have concluded that this is unfounded.*
- *We have reviewed the reports that GCHQ produced on the basis of intelligence sought from the US, and we are satisfied that they conformed with GCHQ's statutory duties. The legal authority for this is contained in the Intelligence Services Act 1994.*
- *Further, in each case where GCHQ sought information from the US, a warrant for interception, signed by a Minister, was already in place, in accordance with the legal safeguards contained in the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000.*

Next Steps

Although we have concluded that GCHQ has not circumvented or attempted to circumvent UK law, it is proper to consider further whether the current statutory framework governing access to private communications remains adequate.

In some areas the legislation is expressed in general terms and more detailed policies and procedures have, rightly, been put in place around this work by GCHQ in order to ensure compliance with their statutory obligations under the Human Rights Act 1998. We are therefore examining the complex interaction between the Intelligence Services Act, the Human Rights Act and the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act, and the policies and procedures that underpin them, further.

2. The Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament (ISC) is a statutory committee of Parliament that has responsibility for oversight of the UK intelligence community. The Committee was originally established by the Intelligence Services Act 1994, and has recently been reformed by the Justice and Security Act 2013.

3. The Committee oversees the intelligence and security activities of the UK, including the policies, expenditure, administration and operations of the Security Service (MI5), the Secret Intelligence Service (MI6) and the Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ). The Committee also scrutinises the work of other parts of the UK intelligence community.

4. The Committee consists of nine Members drawn from both Houses of Parliament. The Members are subject to Section 1(1)(b) of the Official Secrets Act 1989 and are routinely given access to highly classified material in carrying out their duties. The current membership is:

The Rt. Hon. Sir Malcolm Rifkind, MP (Chairman)

The Rt. Hon. Hazel Blears, MP

The Rt. Hon. Lord Butler KG GCB CVO

The Rt. Hon. Sir Menzies Campbell CH CBE QC, MP

Mr Mark Field, MP

The Rt. Hon. Paul Goggins, MP

The Rt. Hon. George Howarth, MP

Dr. Julian Lewis, MP

Lord Lothian QC PC

5. The Committee sets its own agenda and work programme. It takes evidence from Government Ministers, the Heads of the intelligence Agencies, officials from the intelligence community, and other witnesses as required. The Committee is supported in its work by an independent Secretariat and an Investigator. It also has access to legal and financial expertise where necessary. Government has committed to increasing the resources available to the Committee as a result of the increased powers vested in the Committee under the Justice and Security Act 2013.