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## Report of NSA Phone Database Ignites Furor

By Michael Muskal, Times Staff Writer  
12:56 PM PDT, May 11, 2006

President Bush today defended his administration's efforts to gather domestic intelligence on terrorists amid a firestorm created by reports that the National Security Agency has gathered the telephone records of millions of Americans.

In a prepared statement, Bush insisted that the administration's actions were legal and were solely directed at foreign groups like Al Qaeda. However, the president did not directly address a published report that the NSA had collected millions of phone records.

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"The privacy of ordinary Americans is fiercely protected in all our activities," Bush insisted. "We're not mining or trolling through the personal lives of millions of innocent Americans. Our efforts are focused on links to Al Qaeda and their known affiliates."

Bush took no questions from reporters.

USA Today reported that AT&T Corp., Verizon Communications Inc., and BellSouth Corp. telephone companies began turning over records of tens of millions of their customers' phone calls to the NSA shortly after the



**VIDEO**  
**Bush on Phone Record Gathering**  
May 11, 2006 (AP)

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Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

Bush, in the past, has acknowledged and defended NSA programs of electronic surveillance within the United States to monitor Al Qaeda. But today's published report paints a far broader picture of the agency's operation.

"The NSA program reaches into homes and businesses across the nation by amassing information about the calls of ordinary Americans — most of whom aren't suspected of any crime. This program does not involve the NSA listening to, or recording conversations. But the spy agency is using the data to analyze calling patterns in an effort to detect terrorist activity, sources said in separate interviews," the newspaper reported.

The report prompted anger from the Senate Judiciary Committee, which plans to have telephone executives explain the program.

The report could also create problems for the confirmation of Gen. Michael V. Hayden to head the Central Intelligence Agency. Hayden is the NSA's former director.

In his appearance, Bush did not directly address the newspaper's charges, but he defended the overall effort to gather intelligence on Al Qaeda. He used language similar to the past to explain the agency's actions.

"Our intelligence activities strictly target Al Qaeda, and their known affiliates," Bush said. Al Qaeda is our enemy, and we want to know their plans."

"The government does not listen to domestic phone calls without court approval," he said. "The intelligence activities I authorized are lawful and have been briefed to appropriate members of Congress, both Republican and Democrat."

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