

NSA Spying Includes Conversations Between Israel and This Body

Has the U.S. government, through the National Security Agency, spied on Israel—and by extension, Congress? The government will neither confirm or deny it.

But according to a report by *The Wall Street Journal* published Tuesday, the NSA maintained surveillance of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and other U.S. allies, despite a promise from President Barack Obama two years ago that he would end the practice. That much was assumed, but the report, which quotes current and former U.S. officials, said communications between members of Congress and Netanyahu may have been collected in the surveillance.

Needless to say, Congress isn't happy. House Intelligence Committee Chairman Devin Nunes (R-Calif.) issued the following statement:

"The House Intelligence Committee is looking into allegations in The Wall Street Journal regarding possible Intelligence Community collection of communications between Israeli government officials and Members of Congress. The Committee has requested additional information from the IC to determine which, if any, of these allegations are true, and whether the IC followed all applicable laws, rules, and procedures."

The GOP presidential candidates have weighed in, as well. Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.) was among the first to publicly comment, saying on FOX News' *FOX & Friends* program:

"I'm appalled by it. This is exactly why we need more NSA reform ... Since the San Bernardino shooting everybody's

saying, 'Oh, we need more surveillance of Americans.' In reality what we need is more targeted surveillance. I'm not against surveillance, but I am against indiscriminate surveillance.

"It's a real invasion of our privacy. You can see how we stifle speech if you're going to eavesdrop on congressmen, and that it might stifle what they say or who they communicate with. And this is a big, big problem. And it's not a new one, but we absolutely need more controls over the NSA and more controls on our intelligence agencies."

Dr. Ben Carson chose to blame both President Obama and Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton, the former secretary of state, for the newest scandal:

"Instead of focusing on deterring the Iran nuclear threat and fighting against the Mullahs who chant 'Death to America,' President Obama has treated Israel, our staunch, democratic ally in the Middle East, as his real enemy. Not only did he not curtail surveillance on our close friend, he has once again proven himself to be a president that our enemies need not fear and our friends cannot trust.

"No doubt President Obama's former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton knew of the administration's spying efforts on Israel. It is shameful that she participated in undermining the relationship."

Not every Republican was quick to condemn the surveillance program. Also talking on *FOX & Friends*, Sen. Marco Rubio, who has pushed for greater surveillance, took a wait-and-see approach to the matter:

"I want to be very careful, I'm a member of the (Senate) Intelligence Committee, so obviously I want to be very careful about what I say about information of this kind.

Obviously people read that report they have a right to be concerned about it this morning. They have a right to be concerned about the fact that, while some leaders around the world are no longer being targeted, our strongest ally in the Middle East, Israel, is. These are all concerns and they're legitimate."

Historically, Congress has taken a dim view of the Executive Branch peeking into its activities.