

Obama Will Meet With Privacy Oversight Board to Try to Reassure Public on Spying

President **Barack Obama** will meet on Friday with members of a privacy oversight watchdog board to try to reassure Americans rattled by revelations of the U.S. government's vast monitoring of phone and Internet data.

Obama is scrambling to show he has credibility on the issue after coming under fire for the scope of surveillance conducted by the National Security Agency, which was revealed in a series of disclosures by former government contractor Edward Snowden.

The president will hold talks with members of the Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board, a five-person independent agency that has been largely dormant since 2008 and held its first full-fledged meeting on Wednesday after the Senate confirmed David Medine as its chairman last month.

The board's purpose is to review actions the government takes to protect national security, while balancing those steps with the need to protect privacy and civil liberties.

Obama, in an interview with PBS anchor Charlie Rose broadcast on Monday, strongly defended the surveillance program as necessary to protect against the possibility of attacks, but said he wanted to ensure Americans' retained their **right to privacy**.

His approval rating has dropped in some opinion polls, with the fallout over the surveillance program cited as a reason.

Privacy advocates have argued the surveillance activities infringe on Americans' civil liberties, and say the oversight

is insufficient.

The **Obama administration** and high-profile lawmakers have defended the program as vital national security tools that are vigorously overseen by the administration, Congress and a special court.

'Further Questions Warranted'

Medine told Reuters on Wednesday the board was aiming to hold a public event around July 9 to get legal insight from experts, academics and advocates.

"Based on what we've learned so far, the board believes further questions are warranted," said Medine, who previously was a partner at the law firm WilmerHale and served as an associate director at the Federal Trade Commission.

The White House announced steps to try to reveal more information about steps taken by the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court, the secretive court that oversees requests for surveillance warrants against suspected foreign threats inside the United States.

At Obama's direction, his homeland security adviser, Lisa Monaco, asked the director of national intelligence on Thursday to review FISA court opinions and filings relevant to the NSA programs and determine what additional information the government could reveal about them.

The effort "builds on the administration's ongoing effort to declassify a significant amount of information regarding these programs," said a White House statement.

"The president's direction is that as much information as possible be made public while being mindful of the need to protect sources and methods and national security," the White House said.

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