

# NSA: WE STEAL INDUSTRY SECRETS, BUT NOT FOR COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

Kudos to Kevin Gosztola, [who liberated](#) the propaganda the NSA sent workers home with for Thanksgiving to use with family and friends.

I find 3 of the bullet points particularly interesting (all of which Gosztola also touches on).

NSA: we steal secrets, we just use them differently

NSA does not and will not steal industry secrets in order to give U.S. companies a competitive advantage.

The NSA has uttered various versions of this claim since the Snowden leaks started. But I find this formulation particularly telling. NSA is not denying they steal industry secrets (nor could they, since we know they've stolen data from corporations like Petrobras and have stolen secrets from a range of hacking targets).

They're just denying they steal secrets in order to give US companies a competitive advantage.

Of course, they're not calculating the advantage that having the world's most voracious COMINT spy might have for owners of IP. They're not talking about how intelligence on opposition to US products (like GMO or untested chemicals) translates into industrial advantage. They're not talking about how spying influences the work of Defense Contractors (who do, of course, also sell on the international market). They're not talking about how larger financial spying ultimately gives American companies an advantage.

But so long as NSA's workers can tell their

mother-in-law they're not facilitating US cheating (which they are), it's all good, I guess.

We don't demand, we ask nicely

NSA does not and will not demand changes by any vendor to any product, nor does it have any authority to demand such changes.

Again, watch the language carefully. NSA denies it demands changes (presumably meaning to the security of software and hardware producers). It doesn't deny it sometimes asks for changes. It doesn't deny it sometimes negotiates unfairly to get those changes. It doesn't deny it steals data on those changes.

It just doesn't demand those changes.

We perform exceptionally well if you ignore cybersecurity

NSA performs its mission exceptionally well. We strive to be the best that we can be, because that's what America requires as part of its defense in a dangerous world.

Signals intelligence improves our knowledge and understanding of terrorist plans and intentions. It is one of the most powerful tools we have to protect our citizens, soldiers, and allies.

Fundamentally, NSA and partner foreign intelligence agencies work together to protect the world's citizens from a range of threats like terrorism, weapons proliferation, and cyber attacks.

Terrorists and weapons proliferators use the same technology many of us do, such as e-mail. That is why the U.S.

Government compels providers to provide webmail for these carefully identified threats.

In the original, the first of these two bullets is bolded, on top of the emphasis to exceptionally well.

But note how carefully the document dances around NSA's failures in cybersecurity? Elsewhere, the document admits it helps DOD with cybersecurity, but says nothing about [targeting cyber attackers more generally](#).

It then pretends it only uses Section 702 for collection directly from Internet providers, ignoring [the upstream collection and its focus on cybersecurity targets](#). It also pretends it only uses Section 702 for counterproliferation and terrorist targets, though [ODNI has admitted](#) to targeting cyberattackers under Section 702 before.

No lesser expert than Keith Alexander has [equated the cybertheft](#) of American companies to colonial plunder. It is his job to combat those cyberthieves who've plundered the country. And yet, he says he has done his job exceptionally well.

I guess that's why he only wanted to talk about terrorism?