



Toward the identity of “Country X” in MYSTIC.

Today Glenn Greenwald released a bombshell, a story more significant than anything in his book, and probably in the top 5 overall. The NSA is wiretapping the full audio content of everyone in the Bahamas, a small, stable, peaceful democracy, almost entirely devoid of any threat of terrorism. But that's just the beginning, NSA is also collecting every single piece of telephony metadata from Mexico, Philippines, and Kenya, and the full audio content of one additional country, which he chose to redact.

The redaction has caused at least as much controversy than the rest of the story, and has pitted Wikileaks against the Intercept. With Wikileaks vowing to release the name of country X within 3 days. Unfounded rumors about Wikileaks having access to Snowden's cache are flying. The sidestory is threatening to engulf the main story.

It is not necessary to have access to Snowden's cache to identify this country. There is enough existing data. Let's take a look at the evidence so far.

1) ACIDWASH

Der Spiegel's book *Der NSA Komplex* states that ACIDWASH collects 30-40 million telephony metadata records per day from Afghanistan. The slide on the right lists ACIDWASH as being part off the MYSTIC program. This affirmatively associates Afghanistan with the MYSTIC program, but does not, by itself, establish content collection in Afghanistan, under MYSTIC. Even though ACIDWASH collects 30-40 million records per day, it is responsible for only a handful of reports.

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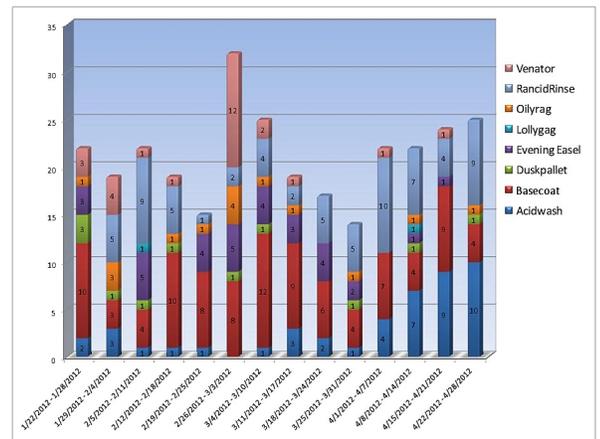


Talking Points:

Approx. 15 – 20 SIGINT Reports per week from MYSTIC sites other than SCALAWAG

from MYSTIC sites other than SCALAWAG, ACIDWASH, and OILYRAG for the week of April 22nd – April 28th

(U//FOUO) MYSTIC Reporting (Excluding SCALAWAG)



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2) SCALAWAG

According to [documents](#) released by the *Washington Post* SCALAWAG is the number 1 provider of actionable SIGINT in “Country X” *Slide Associating ACIDWASH with MYSTIC* under MYSTIC and provides access to 30 days worth of audio content. This probably explains why the chart excludes SCALAWAG, as the number of reports generated from it would render the other bars on the graph too small to be readable, at the appropriate scale. There is nothing here suggesting the identity of country X.

3) The Warning

Both Barton Gellman of the *Washington Post* and Glenn Greenwald of *The Intercept* have chosen to withhold the name of the country based on a warning that they found both credible and specific. Gellman did not specify the warning, but Greenwald did: it would be likely to provoke increased violence. Ergo the country is politically unstable, is a region with considerable violence, and its problems actually matter to the US. This includes a whole host of countries such as Somalia, Yemen, Pakistan, and Iraq. But the country that bubbles to the top of the list is Afghanistan. We would also like

to get out of Afghanistan, this year. This warning is suggestive, but not conclusive.

4) The Resume

A SIGINT analyst posted her resume on Indeed.com, this analyst has worked in Afghanistan extensively, and also used SOMALGET, which is part of MYSTIC. This is suggestive, but not conclusive.

5) Length of redaction bars.

The redaction bars are longish. The name of the country also needs to be long. It just so happens that “Afghanistan” fits rather well. The graphic on the right was made by Electrospace.net. In light of the other pieces of evidence, this makes for a compelling case that Country X is Afghanistan.

6) Wait minute, aren't there 6 MYSTIC countries?

The Intercept states that there are 5 countries under MYSTIC, 2 with full content audio, and 3 with full telephony metadata. But the *Washington Post* states that there is a sixth country going online. Can these both be true simultaneously? It turns out that they can be. The sixth country was scheduled to be online by October 2013, which is after Snowden released his trove. Country 6 may or not actually be online at present. MYSTIC was to provide “Complete access to the additional country's [REDACTED], and provide retrospective tasking and near real-time access/delivery of metadata as required”

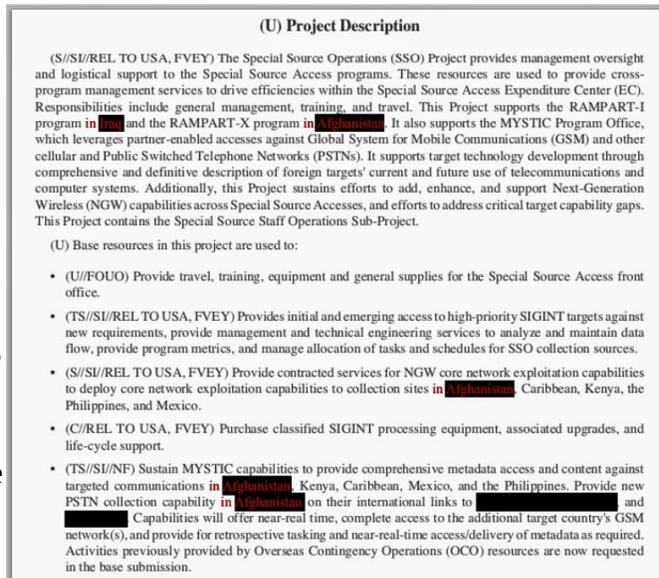


Image showing that "Afghanistan" fits in the bars

7) What about Iraq?

A little more than 6 weeks ago Chris Inglis was quoted thus: “the National Security Agency went from intercepting only about half of enemy signals and taking hours to process them to being able to collect, sort and make available every Iraqi email, text message and phone-location signal in real time” Sparking *The Intercept* to insinuate that Iraq just might be the country under MYSTIC that the *Washington Post* refused to name. The answer is complicated: Mystic is about telephony content and metadata. And Inglis did not mention telephony content. But because he mentioned telephony metadata, it would still be possible for Iraq to be part of MYSTIC. But the timeline doesn't work, Iraq cannot be the sixth country, because it went online long ago, and not scheduled for inclusion on October 2013.

Conclusion: While it is not possible to be 100% certain, it is highly probable that the country omitted by Greenwald is Afghanistan. Better questions are what is the identify of the sixth country reported in the *Washington Post*, what level of access does the NSA have to it – metadata, content, or both? And is it officially online?

Sources

Der NSA Komplex, published by *Der Spiegel*

<https://firstlook.org/theintercept/2014/03/31/nsa-worlds-blows-top-secret-program/>

http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/nsa-surveillance-program-reaches-into-the-past-to-retrieve-replay-phone-calls/2014/03/18/226d2646-ade9-11e3-a49e-76adc9210f19_story.html

<https://firstlook.org/theintercept/article/2014/05/19/data-pirates-caribbean-nsa-recording-every-cell-phone-call-bahamas/>