

Success Stories

NYC Attack Plot 2009

In early September of 2009, while monitoring the activities of Al Qaeda terrorists in Pakistan, NSA noted contact from an individual in the US that the FBI subsequently identified as Colorado-based Najibullah Zazi. The US Intelligence Community, including the FBI and NSA, worked in concert to determine his relationship with Al Qaeda, as well as identify any foreign or domestic terrorist links.

The FBI tracked Zazi as he traveled to New York to meet with co-conspirators, where they were planning to conduct a terrorist attack.

Zazi and his co-conspirators were subsequently arrested. Zazi, upon indictment, pled guilty to conspiring to bomb the NYC subway system.

Compelled collection (authorized under FISA Section 702) against foreign terrorists was critical to the discovery and disruption of this threat against the US.

Chicago Terror Investigation

In October 2009, David Coleman Headley, a Chicago businessman and dual US and Pakistani citizen, was arrested by the FBI as he tried to depart from Chicago O' Hare airport on a trip to Europe. Headley was charged with support to terrorism based on his involvement in the planning and reconnaissance of the hotel attack in Mumbai 2008.

At the time of his arrest, Headley and his colleagues were plotting to attack the Danish newspaper that published the unflattering cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed, at the behest of Al Qaeda.

Compelled collection (authorized under FISA Section 702) against foreign terrorists and metadata analysis (authorized under the business records provision of FISA) were utilized in complement with the FBI law enforcement authorities to investigate Headley's overseas associates and their involvement in Headley's activities.

Bosaaly Moalin

In October 2007, NSA provided the FBI with information obtained from querying the metadata obtained under Section 215. This information established a connection between a phone known to be used by an extremist overseas with ties to al Qaeda's East Africa network, and an unknown San Diego-based number.

That tip ultimately led to the FBI's opening of a full investigation that resulted in a February 2013 conviction of Basaaly Moalin and three others for conspiring to provide material support to al Shabaab, a State Department-designated terrorist group in Somalia that engages in suicide bombings, targets civilians for assassination, and uses improvised explosive devices.

OPERATION WI-FI

In January 2009, using authorized collection under Section 702 to monitor the communications of an extremist overseas with ties to al-Qa'ida, NSA discovered a connection with an individual based in Kansas City.

NSA tipped the information to FBI, which during the course of its investigation uncovered a plot to attack the New York Stock Exchange.

NSA queried metadata obtained under Section 215 to ensure that we identified all potential connections to the plot, assisting the FBI in running down leads.