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and politically suspect groups and individuals.

As is the case with operations, countries maintain deniability by getting information gathered on their domestic situations by allies.

Under development is even more sophisticated "topic recognition" which can home in on guarded conversations that avoid potential trigger words.

Nothing and no one is exempt.

For example, you are talking on the telephone to a friend discussing your son's school play. "Boy," you say sadly, "Bobby really bombed last night," or perhaps you use the word "assassination" or "sabotage" or any one of the key words the computer has been told to flag.

A hard copy of your conversation is produced, passed to the appropriate section (in this case terrorism), and probably ends up in the garbage.

But perhaps the conversation is not so clear-cut or the analyst has poor judgement. Then your name is permanently filed under "possible terrorist". Weeks or even years later, you have a similar conversation and use the same words; the computer filters it out again. Since this is your second time, your name moves from the "possible" to the "probable" file.

Sound absurd? Not at all; it actually happened while I was at CSE.
[snip]

SIGINT specialists are honing their skills at monitoring digital information. SIGINT agencies everywhere are increasingly throwing their surveillance web over the Internet and other data networks