

U.S. PERSON QUERY TERMS EXPLAINED

WHY WOULD NSA CONDUCT A QUERY USING A U.S. PERSON QUERY TERM?

Using a query term associated with a U.S. person can help analysts find foreign intelligence information in the 702 data NSA has acquired. U.S. person query terms are particularly useful in identifying further information about the plans, capabilities, and activities of foreign targets directed against Americans, U.S. businesses, or the U.S. government. U.S. person query terms support NSA's foreign intelligence mission in a number of ways, including:



EXPOSING TERRORIST PLOTS

702 queries using U.S. person terms can help NSA identify international threats to U.S. persons or the U.S. homeland. This allows the Government to better understand foreign terrorist organizations, disrupt terrorist plots, and expose terrorist recruiting efforts.



PROTECTING CRITICAL U.S. GOVERNMENT INFRASTRUCTURE

Queries into 702-acquired data using terms associated with U.S. government infrastructure can help identify plans for cyber attacks in the communications of known foreign actors — this can help NSA to warn the potential victim, develop patches, and prevent intrusions.



FINDING THE SOURCE OF CYBER ATTACKS ON U.S. VICTIMS

When a U.S. person or company has been a victim of a foreign cyber attack, and NSA has reason to believe that existing 702 targets are involved, the Agency may query into 702 data using terms associated with the victim. This can help NSA understand the goals, intentions, and tradecraft of existing foreign intelligence targets — which can prove critical to preventing future attacks or holding malicious cyber-actors accountable.

HOW OFTEN DO U.S. PERSON QUERIES GET REVIEWED?

100% of proposed U.S. person query terms for content queries must be reviewed and approved by NSA's Office of Compliance with final approval by the Office of General Counsel. Information about NSA's use of U.S. person query terms is published in the Annual Statistical Transparency Report.

WHEN DOES A U.S. PERSON QUERY GET REPORTED?

Queries using U.S. person terms that do not follow court-approved procedures, even if due to a typo or similar mistake, are reported to Congress and the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court.

■ WHAT IS A QUERY?

Once NSA obtains 702 collection, NSA analysts conduct "queries" to retrieve specific communications for review by using terms designed to find relevant foreign intelligence, much in the way a word or phrase could be used to find a particular email message in an inbox. Court-approved 702 Querying Procedures provide specific rules limiting how analysts can retrieve 702 targets' communications for review. For example, NSA queries must be reasonably likely to retrieve foreign intelligence information.

■ WHAT IS A U.S. PERSON QUERY TERM?

Analysts can review 702 data using a query term — like an email address or phone number — associated with a U.S. person. These queries do not acquire any new information; they help an analyst review information that has *already been lawfully acquired*. The only U.S. person communications such a query could retrieve are communications with, or in the possession of, an existing foreign intelligence target.

■ WHAT IS FISA SECTION 702?

With the legally compelled assistance of U.S.-based electronic communication service providers, NSA relies on FISA Section 702 to acquire the communications of specific foreign intelligence targets. Section 702 targets must be non-U.S. persons outside of the United States. The authority may not be used to target an American citizen, lawful permanent resident, U.S. business, or anyone inside the United States.