

Despite pledges by President George W. Bush and American intelligence officials to the contrary, hundreds of US citizens overseas have been eavesdropped on as they called friends and family back home, according to two former military intercept operators who worked at the giant National Security Agency (NSA) center in Fort Gordon, Georgia.

"These were just really everyday, average, ordinary Americans who happened to be in the Middle East, in our area of intercept and happened to be making these phone calls on satellite phones," said Adrienne Kinne, a 31-year old US Army Reserves Arab linguist assigned to a special military program at the NSA's Back Hall at Fort Gordon from November 2001 to 2003.

Kinne described the contents of the calls as "personal, private things with Americans who are not in any way, shape or form associated with anything to do with terrorism."

She said US military officers, American journalists and American aid workers were routinely intercepted and "collected on" as they called their offices or homes in the United States.

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