Report: AT&T Grants DEA Access to 26 Years Worth of Phone Records

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Since 2007, AT&T and the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) have worked closely together to provide the Agency with access to AT&T's phone records going back as far as 1987.

The New York Times says it received "law enforcement sensitive" Powerpoint slides [1] that outline the scope of the partnership, dubbed the Hemisphere Project. The government foots the bill for AT&T employees to work alongside DEA teams and pull up phone records from a massive database when they are requested. The database is stored by AT&T and the DEA is allowed to search it by acquiring "administrative subpoenas."

As the report points out, this program exceeds the breadth of the NSA's U.S. phone record collecting. Under the Patriot Act, the NSA keeps records going back five years. Under the Hemisphere Project, the records go back 26 years and include information on all callers on AT&T's network, not just AT&T customers. Referencing the slides, the report indicates that nearly four billion call records daily are added to the database and that the records include location data for the calls.

News of AT&T's and the DEA's huge phone data collection efforts comes as the U.S. government is still under fire for the NSA's PRISM program that collected call data from the U.S.'s major carriers as well as web service giants like Google and Apple.

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