

Google deliberately stole information but executives 'covered it up' for years

by Jack Doyle and Daniel Bates via reed - Daily Mail UK Sunday, May 27 2012, 10:29pm

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- Work of Street View cars to be examined over allegations Google used them to download personal details
- Emails, texts, photos and documents taken from wi-fi networks as cars photographed British roads
- Engineer who designed software said a privacy lawyer should be consulted
- Calls for police and Information Commissioner to investigate new evidence



Open slather data theft and illegal privacy breaches -- corporate hacking is a criminal offence!

Google is facing an inquiry into claims that it deliberately harvested information from millions of UK home computers.

The Information Commissioner data protection watchdog is expected to examine the work of the internet giant's Street View cars.

They downloaded emails, text messages, photographs and documents from wi-fi networks as they photographed virtually every British road.

It is two years since Google first admitted stealing fragments of personal data, but claimed it was a 'mistake'.

Now the full scale of its activities has emerged amid accusations of a cover-up after US regulators found a senior manager was warned as early as 2007 that the information was being captured as its cars trawled the country but did nothing.

Around one in four home networks in the UK is thought to be unsecured - lacking password protection - allowing personal data to be collected. Technology websites and bloggers have suggested that Google harvested the information simply because it was able to do so and would later work out a way to use it to make money.

The slow reaction of the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) to deal with the data theft is in direct contrast to the vigorous efforts of watchdogs in Germany, France and even the Czech Republic.

The fact that the Government was at the same time courting executives at Google opens up uncomfortable questions about its relationship with the company.

Last month a report by the US media regulator the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) revealed that the Google programmer who wrote the Street View software repeatedly warned that it collected personal data, and called for a legal and privacy review.

Yesterday he was named as Marius Milner, 41, a British software engineer from Hove, East Sussex, who now lives in California. He has pleaded the fifth amendment against self-incrimination and refused to answer investigators' questions.

Yesterday at the family home, his stepmother said: 'He has always had a love of computers, even from an early age I think. He is a brilliant mind.

'He got a degree from Trinity College, Cambridge. My husband is an elderly man. He is nearly 90 and he is rather distressed by this. We really don't want to say any more.'

The report by the FCC attacked Google for inadequate oversight of Street View, and claimed it was planning to use the data collected for other internal projects.

A spokesman for the Information Commissioner's Office said it would examine what Google knew at the time and whether it breached the Data Protection Act.

But critics said the ICO was doing 'too little, too late', and pointed to its earlier report into Street View which concluded that any collection of personal data was 'inadvertent'.

As Britain's privacy watchdog was accused of being lily-livered in its handling of Google, regulators in the US and continental Europe confronted it head on.

In Germany Google was forced to stop filming for Street View owing to privacy concerns by Hamburg prosecutors, who opened a criminal investigation.

In France Google was fined £87,000 by the privacy regulator CNIL, the largest it had ever handed out.

In the Czech Republic Street View was banned in September 2010 after negotiations between Google and the authorities over privacy concerns failed.

A Tory MP said he would raise the issue of Google's information gathering when Parliament reconvenes.

Robert Halfon said: 'The FCC report seems to indicate that there is far more to it than an innocent mistake. Clearly what happened is unacceptable.

'Google created the privatised surveillance society by hoovering up our emails and wifi data. Google has some serious questions to answer.'

Concern about links between the internet giant and the Government have emerged in recent weeks, with the Daily Mail revealing that Tory ministers have met Google executives an average of once every month since the General Election.

This week Culture Secretary Jeremy Hunt will face the Leveson Inquiry to face questions about his links to another multi-national company, News International.

His special adviser Adam Smith was forced to quit after text messages were published by the inquiry showing his closeness to a News International lobbyist. Mr Hunt has also faced repeated calls to quit.

Nick Pickles, director of Big Brother Watch said: 'It appears Google deliberately and without remorse spied on people's wi-fi networks and has now been caught trying to cover it up.

'The continued thirst of big-data companies for personal information is a serious threat to privacy and all too often consumers find themselves without redress when their rights are compromised.'

A spokesman for the Information Commissioner said: 'We are currently studying the FCC report to consider what further action, if any, needs to be taken.

Google provided our office with a formal undertaking in November 2010 about their future conduct, following their failure in relation to the collection of wi-fi data by their Street View cars.

'This included a provision for the ICO to audit Google's privacy practices. The audit was published in August 2011 and we will be following up on it later this year, to ensure our recommendations have been put in place.'

Google spokesman Anthony House said: 'We have always been clear that the leaders of this project did not want or intend to use this payload data. Indeed Google never used it in any of our products or services.

'Both the Department of Justice and the FCC have looked into this closely - including reviewing the internal correspondence - and both found no violation of law.'

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[Are the excuses of top Google execs believable, not on your life? Consider the position of former CEO and current chairman/'woman,' evil deviant and Bilderberg attendee, Eric Schmidt -- known to order the suppression of data/websites for commercial and ideological reasons!

Google has been hauled before so many anti-trust bodies for data manipulation, we have lost count. It is beyond doubt that CIA partner Google engages in clandestine practices not in the public's interests -- we vigorously disapprove. We recommend award winning alternative search engine, [ixquick](#) for all users that value their privacy. Share this recommendation with privacy conscious friends.]



Sexual deviant, CIA partner, data miner and Bilderberger, Google chief, Eric Schmidt

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