

COMPTE RENDU

Britain spied on companies, diplomats and politicians in French-speaking Africa

Pascal Lamy, former head of the World Trade Organization, was under the scrutiny of the British services ahead of a crucial G20 summit in London.

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Pascal Lamy (top L) with then Britain's Prime Minister Gordon Brown (bottom R), China's President Hu Jintao (C) and Italy's Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi (top R) at the G20 summit in London on April 2, 2009. Lamy was wiretaped by British intelligence ahead of this crucial meeting. Crédits : © Dylan Martinez / Reuters

If the bulk of the GCHQ's intercepts targets English-speaking Africa, the British intelligence service also routinely checks the communications of French-speaking countries, their diplomats, civil servants and NGOs.

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Pascal Lamy was among those targeted. Head of the World Trade Organization since 2004, the French member of the leftwing **Parti socialiste** was under the scrutiny of the British services in March 2009. At the time, he was at the end of his first term. In early March, when the GCHQ documents from the Snowden archive, initially provided to Glenn Greenwald and Laura Poitras, consulted by *Le Monde* in collaboration with *The Intercept* (<https://theintercept.com/>), show his email and telephone communication were spotted by the GCHQ, Pascal Lamy was in the Pacific region, and more specifically in Australia. On March 2nd, he gave a speech at the Sidney Lowy Institute, discussing subsidies for African cotton farmers. Three days later, he was a guest at New Zealand's Parliament. But there are more important things that may have interested the British government.

Crucial negotiations in London

At the time, the WTO is just about to make it official that world trade was slowing down, in the aftermath of the financial crisis, and London was preparing to host the 2009 G20 summit, on April 2nd. The success of this summit, chaired by then-prime minister Gordon Brown, hinged on the progress of the negotiations on world economy. Mr Lamy hoped they would allow the necessary

measures to be taken, and was pressuring governments to dissuade them from setting up new protectionist barriers. Knowing his arguments beforehand would probably go a long way to ensuring a positive outcome for the G20 summit - which ultimately was the case.

The positions of most key actors in trade regulations seem to have been of huge interest to the GCHQ. In 2008, they targeted Emmanuel Glimet - he was cabinet director of the French deputy minister to foreign trade, Anne-Marie Idrac, and also deputy cabinet director of economy minister Christine Lagarde. Both of them were working on several [international](#) meetings, and were looking for solutions to counterbalance the economic crisis that had started in the United States.

French diplomats were also routinely targeted. According to a technical test dated December 2009, the French embassy in N'Djamena was under surveillance, as well as French diplomats in Niamey and Kinshasa. Cell phone numbers and email addresses are listed on the intercept tests seen by *Le Monde*. Among the targets was the French ambassador in Kinshasa Pierre Jacquemot. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, [France](#) has a particularly active role in local politics, but also in economic activities. In March 2009, an important deal regarding the exploitation of uranium mines is signed between Areva and Kinshasa, during a visit of French president [Nicolas Sarkozy](#). Were the British services motivated by mining interests? In January, the same year, Areva had also signed a strategic partnership in [Niger](#).

Areva seems to have been an important target for the GCHQ, but it was not the only company of interest. In [Paris](#), the switchboard of oil giant Total and of the defense conglomerate Thalès were also identified in a January 2009 document.

Another document from January 30th, 2009 shows intercepts were also targeting the negotiations aimed at freeing six French employees of the Bourbon group, who were briefly captured and then freed in november 2008 in Bakassi, at the [border](#) between Cameroon and [Nigeria](#). French NGOs were also targeted: emails from and to Médecins du [Monde](#) were also intercepted by the GCHQ, along with several phone line belonging to the French development directorate, and the phone switch of the ministry of foreign affairs.

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The documents also show that the British services' interest was not limited to foreign policy. Phone lines in the Ministry of interior, and the cell phone of one of its employees, were listed with other targets in a document from January 2009 and mislabeled "Matignon" - the office of the French Prime Minister. Of course, France was far from being the only country whose national sovereignty was violated by the GCHQ. Many embassies in Paris, and their diplomats, were also spied upon by the British secret services.

Snowden files: our revelations

Le Monde worked directly, during several days, in collaboration with The Intercept, on the Edward Snowden archive given to Glenn Greenwald and Laura Poitras: tens of thousands of documents exfiltrated by the former agent from the NSA servers, and safely stored by *The Intercept*.

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- British spying: tentacles reach across Africa's heads of states and business leaders
- British spies closely track mineral-rich Congo's business dealings
- Britain spied on companies, diplomats and politicians in French-speaking Africa
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- [That the GCHQ monitored communications of key Israeli officials, even though the country is one of the United States' closest allies](#) ([/pixels/article/2016/12/07/britain-has-spent-years-spying-on-israel-s-leaders_5044899_4408996.html](#))