



**ELECTRONIC FRONTIER FOUNDATION**  
Protecting Rights and Defending Freedom on the Electronic Frontier [eff.org](http://eff.org)

## **The Crypto Wars: Governments Working to Undermine Encryption**

Revelations from whistleblower Edward Snowden expose the NSA's long-standing, systematic effort to weaken and sabotage commercially available encryption used by individuals and businesses around the world.

This means that even when we believe that we are communicating using trustworthy and secure methods, our information and activities may be compromised by backdoors and vulnerabilities inserted into systems by governments. This puts our financial records, business secrets, webmail, medical and legal records, cars, and airplanes—all computing that relies on a level of security—at risk.



### **Fighting for or against cryptography is a battle known as the “Crypto Wars”.**

We thought we won this battle. In the 1990s EFF led the fight to protect users' ability to have strong, uncompromised encryption. In collaboration with leading academics, industry trade associations, and politicians from all over the world, we defeated U.S. President Clinton's “Clipper Chip” – a proposal to compel companies to give the government backdoor keys into commercial encryption technologies. We also defeated export regulations that effectively prevented the development and distribution of strong encryption.

### **We won in the courts, Congress, and public opinion. NSA undermined them all.**

According to documents leaked to the *New York Times*, a project known as “BULLRUN” (note: NSA assigns their products multiple names) is the NSA's effort to bypass our democratic mechanisms and sabotage our security anyway—in secret. Many details of BULLRUN are still undisclosed, but we do know enough to be angry.

### **What we do know about BULLRUN—our infrastructure is under attack!**

- NSA has inserted hidden vulnerabilities into our security standards, resulting in NIST, the U.S. National Institute of Standards and Technology, withdrawing support from a key security standard that millions of products rely upon.
- NSA works to sabotage our systems by inserting backdoors and weakening them.
- NSA secretly infiltrates companies to conduct this sabotage or works with companies to build weaknesses in systems, or coerces them into weakening their systems, all in secret.
- NSA works to shape that the global cryptography market to ensure that people only have access to compromised systems.

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