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By Sir Terry Leahy

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GOOGLE SPIES: THE SINISTER TRUTH

Web giant deliberately stole information but executives 'covered it up' for years

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.

By **Jack Doyle** and **Daniel Bates**

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

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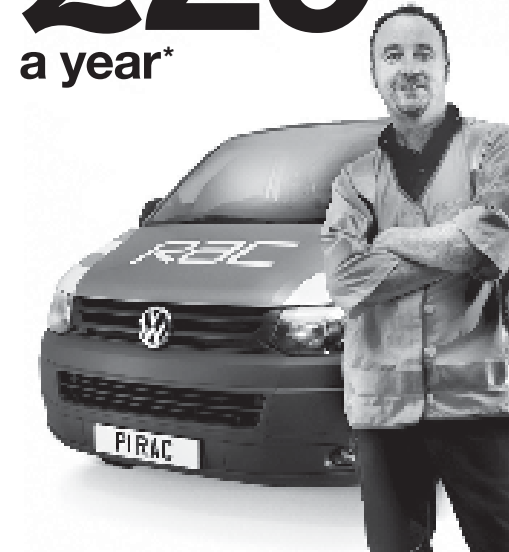
Jennifer Saunders with her TV award last night

Bafta glory for brave Jennifer

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Google's wall of silence and lies over the cars spying on millions of families

Continued from Page One

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-liv-



ered 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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STEPHEN GLOVER PAGE 14

How the Mail revealed Tories' closeness to the internet giant

By Neil Sears

GOVERNMENT ministers have met executives from Google an average of once a month since the General Election.

Official figures revealed by the Daily Mail this month showed that David Cameron had met the American company's representatives three times, Chancellor George Osborne four times - and Culture Minister Ed Vaizey had racked up seven meetings.

The total of 23 such ministerial meetings since June 2010 is clear evidence that Google has the Government's ear. But the closeness goes further still.

For it has become almost routine to switch between working for the Tories and for the search engine, with three such job moves public knowledge.

Among those to make the move is Naomi Gummer, former political adviser to Culture Secretary Jeremy Hunt.

Last month she declared it was a 'myth'



From the Daily Mail, May 19

that laws can protect children from internet pornography and insisted it was up to parents to keep their children safe from disturbing material.

She told a conference of child welfare experts: 'Technology is moving so fast that legislation is a blunt tool for addressing

these challenges.'

Mr Hunt has failed to legislate to force internet companies to protect children despite threatening to do so.

The Daily Mail has campaigned for an automatic block on online porn. The Government has launched a policy consultation but appears to favour less stringent rules.

Google certainly has plenty to gain from a government which makes decisions in its favour.

The company has had talks with the Tory administration about a contract to store NHS patients' records, and is concerned about a forthcoming Communications Bill which will affect how digital media operate in Britain.

It has also faced criticism for receiving some £2.1billion of income from Britain in 2010, but getting away with a minimal tax bill by locating its international operations in Ireland, where the corporation tax rate is lower.

Look who showed up for Google bride



Conspicuous in non-morning suit, Mr Cameron with wife Samantha

THE close links between Google and the upper echelons of the Conservative Party were on public display this weekend at a society wedding attended by David Cameron.

The Prime Minister and his wife Samantha were guests at the marriage of Naomi Gummer, a senior Google executive. She was a political adviser to Culture Secretary

By Jack Doyle

Jeremy Hunt - whose brief includes internet regulation - before moving to the web giant where she is now a public policy analyst.

Miss Gummer, 27, married the Duchess of Cornwall's godson Henry Allsopp, 38, heir to the 6th Baron Hindlip, in Chadlington,



Embattled Jeremy Hunt, wife Lucia and their two youngsters



Bride Naomi Gummer with her husband Henry Allsopp

Oxfordshire. The duchess also attended the ceremony as did Mr Allsopp's sister Kirstie, the TV presenter.

Embattled Mr Hunt was there with his wife Lucia and their two young children. He has faced repeated calls to resign over his links to News International and faces a crunch session before the Leveson Inquiry this week. He

wore a morning suit, like most of the male guests, while the Prime Minister opted for a less formal blue lounge suit. Mrs Cameron wore a Peter Pilotto dress.

Miss Gummer is the daughter of PR guru Lord Chadlington. His country estate borders the Camerons' in Oxfordshire, and is president of the Prime Minister's Witney constituency party.

Claims of innocence that slowly unravelled

■ **OCTOBER 2006:** Computer engineer Marius Milner devises software for Google Street View vans which captures private information from personal computers. He warns there are privacy implications and the company should consult lawyers.

■ **MAY 2007:** Google Street View launched in the US.

■ **2008:** Milner again warns two colleagues - including a senior manager - that personal data is being collected.

■ **MARCH 2009:** Street View launches in the UK.

■ **EARLY 2010:** UK data protection watchdog, the Information Commissioner (ICO) launches inquiry into Street View.

■ **APRIL 27 2010:** Google denies collecting information, only to admit a few days later: 'We have been mistakenly collecting samples of data from open Wi-Fi networks... Quite simply, it was a mistake'.

■ **OCTOBER 22 2010:** Google admits: 'In some instances entire emails were captured... as well as passwords.'

■ **NOVEMBER 2010:** ICO secures formal undertaking that Google will improve data protection compliance but concludes any collection of personal data was 'inadvertent'.

■ **JANUARY TO SEPTEMBER 2011:** Google refuses four times to co-operate with US Federal Communications Commission, before finally giving some key information such as names of employees who created Street View software.

■ **APRIL 16 2012:** Google fined £15,000 by FCC after it found the company 'wilfully and repeatedly' failed to help with its investigation.

■ **APRIL 30 2012:** FCC report finds that rather than being 'a mistake' Google's software was 'intended' to harvest information from networks.

■ **MAY 27 2012:** ICO indicates inquiry into Street View's harvested data.