

Microsoft wants to publish details of security requests

WASHINGTON, USA: Microsoft said on Tuesday (16 July) it had asked the US government for permission to disclose details of how it handles national security data requests, citing "inaccuracies" in recent media reports.



Microsoft general counsel Brad Smith said the company had asked the US attorney general "to personally take action to permit Microsoft and other companies to share publicly more complete information about how it handles national security requests for customer information."

"We believe the US constitution guarantees our freedom to share more information with the public, yet the government is stopping us from doing so," Smith said in a blog posting.

He said the government has yet to respond to a petition filed in court on 19 June seeking permission to publish the number of national security requests the company has received.

"We hope the attorney general can step in to change this," Smith said, adding that in the interim, "we want to share as much information as we currently can."

Significant inaccuracies

He added that "there are significant inaccuracies in the interpretations of leaked government documents reported in the media last week." The reports indicated Microsoft facilitated the government's ability to tap video calls on Skype, a service Microsoft bought in 2011.

Smith said that with regard to Skype, the company only responds to legal government demands, and can only comply with orders for requests about specific accounts. He added that technical changes made to Skype in 2012 "were not made to facilitate greater government access to audio, video, messaging or other customer data."

Smith said the policy is similar for its Outlook email service and SkyDrive cloud service.

"We still require governments to follow legal processes when requesting customer data," Smith said.

Apple, Facebook, Microsoft and other Internet titans have come under heightened scrutiny since word leaked of vast, covert surveillance programs US authorities insist target only foreign terror suspects and have helped thwart attacks.

Source: AFP via I-Net Bridge

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