

A BULLETIN FROM

Fiveshadow News Network

May 19, 2079

Japan Mobilizes Military To Quell Furor Over “I-Spy” Scandal: How Much Does The Government Really Know? And About Whom?

By TOM BROWN

Prime Minister Tomoyoshi Sakurai was forced to send armed troops into the streets of Tokyo as thousands of irate Japanese surrounded government buildings. The protest appears to be rooted in news reports that the Japanese government has been buying electronic data from private enterprise companies about the habits and preferences of consumers. This data is allegedly being funneled into “confidential datafiles” on all Japanese citizens.

Using a portable amplification system, Yukiko Maeda urged her fellow citizens to “show your anger with your bodies” by crowding every artery in Japan and by “cancelling your business with every company which has profited from our privacy.” Maeda holds no elected office; she is, instead, the president of the largest computer club in Tokyo.

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The crowds in the street so far have been loud but peaceful. However, as troops started to appear, fists were raised in defiance — and the volume of anti-government chants elevated markedly.

Only two casualties were reported as of two hours ago. An elderly man and woman were reportedly admitted to a Tokyo clinic suffering from “heart problems” and “general agitation.”

Government spokesperson Ami Katoh was perspiring heavily at a hastily called press conference packed with media from around the world.

“There is not much I can tell you,” Katoh said as her image and voice were beamed worldwide, “until we can investigate this thoroughly. This is not what it seems!”

However, the Japanese division of MSNBC reported in its televised and Internet newscasts that it stands by its report yesterday which said that an unnamed government employee offered MSNBC the equivalent of millions of U.S. dollars to share its consumer profiles of Japanese citizens with the Japanese government.

“You should do this,” the anonymous government official was reported to have told MSNBC. “Japan has been dealing with many other cooperative media companies for at least a year.”

MSNBC said that, in the alleged proposal made to them, the “datamongerer” profiled how hundreds of Japanese government officials have been secretly compiling data from grocers, booksellers, and dozens of other industries into one central data bank. “Of course,” MSNBC reported the government employee said, “this data will never be used disrespectfully.”

MSNBC said it has not been able to fully confirm all the details of its report; however, it said it has enough corroboration to maintain the overall accuracy of its reports.

Outside the Prime Minister's residence, Maeda screamed to the crowd, "You have been violated! The government has no right to know what you eat and what you read! Resist this! Resist this! Resist! Resist! Resist!" Her words seemed to move the crowd toward frenzy.

Prime Minister Sakurai is scheduled to speak to the nation at 9:00 A.M. Tokyo time tomorrow morning. "He'd better have lots of answers," said MSNBC news commentator Masato Mori, "or there's no telling what the people in the streets will do."

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