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<http://antiwar.com/blog/2013/10/31/in-2013-you-paid-574-to-the-nsa/print/>

In 2013, You Paid \$574 to the NSA

By John Glaser

October 31, 2013

Imagine being beaten to a pulp by a mafia hit-man. Your nose is broken and dribbling blood, your left eye is swollen shut, you may have broken ribs. Somehow, you manage to stand up. Just then, the hit-man produces an invoice for his services to the tune of \$574.

The only thing worse than being violently assaulted is being forced to pay for your own abuser's time and effort.

That's what the NSA is like. According to a Cato blog post ^[1] by Steve Hanke, professor of applied economics at Johns Hopkins University, every American taxpayer is billed \$574 per year to keep the NSA up and running.

For months, the American public has received a steady stream ^[2] of new information detailing the massive scale and scope of the United States' spying activities. Of course, maintaining a surveillance state powerful enough to reach into the inboxes ^[3] of world leaders, friend and foe ^[4], is not cheap. Indeed, as the *Washington Post* revealed ^[5] when it released portions of the so-called Black Budget, this year's price tag on America's spook infrastructure comes out to a whopping \$52.6 billion.

This is, of course, a tremendous sum – more than double the size of the Department of Agriculture, more than triple the size of NASA; the list ^[6] goes on... But, what really puts this

number into perspective is its average cost to each American taxpayer, or what I would call the NSA and associated agencies' "rent."

Yes, the NSA's rent, charged to every taxpayer ^[7] living under its web of surveillance, comes out to an exorbitant \$574 per year. If this is the price the federal government is charging American taxpayers to have their own privacy invaded, then I say the NSA's rent is too damn high.

The NSA is collecting every American's daily telephone metadata in bulk. It's surveilling our emails, IM chats, video conferences. It's systematically violating both statutory and constitutional laws meant to protect Americans' privacy and individual rights. Even Rep. Jim Sensenbrenner, the author of the authoritarian PATRIOT ACT, believes NSA activity "threatens our First, Second and Fourth Amendment rights."

For all this, Americans get a bill. We pay for our own abuse.