

After NSA scandal, US intelligence budget declines
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Lead counsel Ken Cuccinelli (left) confers with US Senator Rand Paul (centre) during a news conference about their class action lawsuit against US President Barack Obama over NSA spying revelations, outside the US District Court in Washington February 12, 2014 which also named James Clapper as a defendant. The proposed 2015 budget will see a five percent drop in US intelligence agencies after a year marked by controversy over far-reaching electronic spying. US intelligence agencies will see a five percent drop in funding under a proposed 2015 budget, officials said yesterday, after a year marked by controversy over far-reaching electronic spying.

Director of National Intelligence, James Clapper said the requested budget for most of the country's 17 spy services came to US\$45.6 billion (RM148 billion) for fiscal year 2015, which begins October 1.

The proposed budget, which must be approved by Congress, is lower than the 2014 national intelligence program budget, at US\$48.2 billion.

The Pentagon is also planning for a slight drop in funding for intelligence activities that support the military, requesting US\$13.3 billion for next fiscal year, officials said.

The 2014 budget had allocated US\$14 billion for the military intelligence program.

In keeping with past practice, Clapper's office, or ODNI, did not divulge any further details or provide a breakdown of the budget.

"Any and all subsidiary information concerning the National Intelligence Program budget, whether the information concerns particular intelligence agencies or particular intelligence programs, will not be publicly disclosed," ODNI said in a brief statement.

Given the secrecy surrounding America's spy agencies and their funding, it remains unclear if the fallout from ex-intelligence contractor, Edward Snowden's leaks has had any impact on the National Security Agency's 2015 budget.

The trove of classified files disclosed by Snowden since June included documents – leaked to The Washington Post – that shed some light on the so-called "black budget" that funds for different spy operations and programs.

The documents gave a breakdown on proposed intelligence spending for 2013, with the CIA budget ranking first at US\$14.7 billion, followed by the NSA at US\$10.8 billion and the National Reconnaissance Office at US\$10.3 billion.

The NRO operates America's network of spy satellites. – AFP, March 7, 2014.

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