

## Google defies White House over disclosing users' searches

By David Teather  
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From The Guardian

Google is defying a request by the US government to hand over data revealing what its users are searching for online. **The Bush administration wants a list of requests entered into Google's online search engine in an unspecified single week. It also wants 1m randomly selected web addresses from Google's databases.**

The White House said the information is part of an effort to protect children from online pornography, and would not violate personal privacy - but the request immediately raised concerns.

Rights groups in the US are already on alert after revelations that the White House authorised phone tapping without court orders. "This is exactly the kind of thing we have been worrying about with search engines for some time," Pam Dixon of the World Privacy Forum told the Associated Press. "Google should be commended for fighting this."

Yahoo and Microsoft confirmed they had handed over similar requested information to the US government. America Online said it had complied in part, providing a list of search terms already publicly available.

The administration first requested the search data in the summer, but Google refused - leading the US attorney general, Alberto Gonzales, to ask for a court order this week.

In a statement, Google said the demand was overreaching, and that it intended to fight the court order. The firm handles up to 1bn searches in an average week. Yahoo said it had not disclosed any personal information. "We are rigorous defenders of our users' privacy," a spokeswoman said. "In our opinion this is not a privacy issue." Microsoft said it too had protected users.

The department of justice said it wants to simulate how people search the internet. In a brief filed with the court, it said the information would "assist the government in its efforts to understand the behaviour of current web users, and to estimate how often web users encounter harmful-to-minors material in the course of their searches."