



The National Security Agency is winning its long-running secret war on encryption, using supercomputers, technical trickery, court orders and behind-the-scenes persuasion to undermine the major tools protecting the privacy of everyday communications in the Internet age, according to newly disclosed documents.

The agency has circumvented or cracked much of the encryption, or digital scrambling, that guards global commerce and banking systems, protects sensitive data like trade secrets and medical records, and automatically secures the e-mails, Web searches, Internet chats and phone calls of Americans and others around the world, the documents show.

Many users assume — or have been assured by Internet companies — that their data is safe from prying eyes, including those of the government, and the N.S.A. wants to keep it that way. The agency treats its recent successes in deciphering protected information as among its most closely guarded secrets, restricted to those cleared for a highly classified program code-named Bullrun, according to the documents, provided by Edward J. Snowden, the former N.S.A. contractor.

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