

Former NSA spy and privacy expert speaks out on Google's record \$5B court settlement

Former NSA intelligence officer Leslie Gruis says it shows 'organizations you trust with your data will always be driven by profit motive'

WASHINGTON, DC, UNITED STATES, January 5, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Last week [Google](#) settled a record \$5 billion lawsuit for spying on users implementing the "incognito" mode of its Chrome browser.

The preliminary settlement, agreed to on Dec. 28 by Alphabet's (GOOGL.O) and due to be signed off in coming weeks by U.S. District Judge Yvonne Gonzalez Rogers in Oakland, CA., is the result of a 2020 class action lawsuit. According to news reports, attorneys for Google agreed to settle the lawsuit claiming it secretly tracked the internet use of millions of people who thought they were doing their browsing privately.

"While not an admission of guilt, this settlement suggests that Google has been caught snooping," says former NSA intelligence officer and award-winning privacy author [Leslie Gruis](#), Ph.D. "It also shows that organizations you trust with your data in cyberspace will always be driven by the profit motive."

The class action plaintiffs alleged that Google's analytics, cookies and apps let the Alphabet unit track their activity even when they set Google's Chrome browser to "Incognito" mode and other browsers to "private" browsing mode. Settlement terms were not disclosed, but Google lawyers reportedly agreed to a binding term sheet through mediation, and expected to present a formal settlement for court approval by Feb. 24. The case is *Brown et al v Google LLC et al*, U.S. District Court, Northern District of California, No. 20-03664.

"Along with 2019's record-breaking \$5 billion fine against Facebook for privacy violations, and



In *The Privacy Pirates*, Leslie Gruis discusses some of the controversial issues, covering everything from attempts to protect privacy rights—many unsuccessful—to abuses of privacy by large companies and accusations of privacy invasion by the government.

Amazon's \$25 million fine last year for allegedly mishandling children's information on the Alexa platform, this is the latest in a series of scandals with the misuse of trusted private information owned by Americans," Dr. Gruis says.

"[The privacy pirates](#) selling your data and violating your trust aren't necessarily evil," Dr. Gruis says. "They're just motivated by money and self-interest, and are taking advantage of Americans' trust in a way that our own spy agencies would never dare to. Ordinary users need to stand up for their rights and to take action."

Leslie Gruis, Ph.D. is a former senior CIA and NSA intelligence officer and an award-winning author on defending the privacy rights of Americans. Her latest book, "The Privacy Pirates", is available on Amazon.

ABOUT LESLIE GRUIS



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*Leslie Gruis, Ph.D., author of
The Privacy Pirates*

Leslie Gruis obtained her Ph.D. in Applied Mathematics and Engineering Sciences from Northwestern University. She worked as an intelligence officer for the U.S. National Security Agency (NSA) for 30 years. Early in her career, Dr. Gruis developed disruptive technology solutions to difficult national security challenges, and served as the first president of NSA's Women in Mathematics Society. As a senior intelligence officer, Dr. Gruis contributed to the debate on alleged privacy abuses from the inside. She worked with government attorneys to explain the capabilities that technologies brought in order to develop legally defensible sources and methods to protect national security while also preserving civil rights. Her last two assignments were at US Cyber Command and the National Intelligence Council at the Office of the Director of National Intelligence. Since retirement, Dr. Gruis' interests are privacy, and mentoring K-12 Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) students. Dr. Gruis has spoken on privacy in various forums including the University of Alaska, the Serious Games Association at the University of Montreal, and the Cosmos Club in Washington DC.. To book Dr. Gruis for a speaking engagement, send an email to info@privacypastpresentfuture.com .

John H Arundel



Leslie Gruis, Ph.D. worked as an intelligence officer for the NSA for 30 years.

Perdicus Communications

+1 703-963-4191

[email us here](#)

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