

JAY ROCKEFELLER TOLD US WHAT RUSSELL TICE JUST CONFIRMED, YEARS AGO

On K0 the other night, Russell Tice expanded on the details of the warrantless wiretapping program, revealing that, the government has been data mining both our telecom communications and our credit card transactions.

As far as the wiretap information that made it to NSA, there was also data mining that was involved. At some point information from credit cards and financial transactions was married in with that information. So of the lucky US citizens, tens of thousands of whom, that are now on digital databases at NSA who have no idea of this also have that sort of information that has been included on those digital files that have been warehoused.

[snip]

This is garnered from algorithms that have been put together to try to just dream up scenarios that might be information that is associated with how a terrorist could operate. Like I mentioned last night, the one to two minute pizza delivery call, things of that nature, of which an innocent citizen could be easily tied into these things. And once that information gets to the NSA, and they start to put it through the filters there, where they have language interpreters and stuff and they start looking for word-recognition, if someone just talked about the daily news and mentioned, you know, something about the Middle East they could easily be brought to the forefront of having

that little flag put by their name that says "potential terrorist" and of course this US citizen wouldn't have a clue.

[snip]

I have a guess where it was developed. I think it was probably developed out of the Department of Defense; this is probably the remnants of the Total Information Awareness that came out of DARPA. That's my guess.

Again, this should surprise no one who has followed our detailed discussions over the last four years about the kind of data mining they were probably doing.

In fact, we learned as much from someone briefed on the program in the days following the first revelations about the program in December 2005. That's when Jello Jay Rockefeller released the letter he had sent to Cheney about the program. That letter described the program in precisely those terms—the old TIA program that Iran-Contra retread John Poindexter had developed.

As I reflected on the meeting today, and the future we face, John Poindexter's TIA project sprung to mind, exacerbating my concern regarding the direction the Administration is moving with regard to security, technology, and surveillance.

In fact, Jello Jay was not just pissing in the wind with his letter, as is commonly assumed. Rather, he was establishing a legislative record that Cheney was doing precisely what the Senate moved to forbid the very next day. Jello Jay recorded his impressions that the Administration had briefed him (and the other intelligence committee heads) on a program that suspiciously resembled the TIA program the day before the Senate voted unanimously to prohibit money from being "obligated or expended on research and development on the Terrorism Information Awareness program." (I invite to you review this

timeline on Senate efforts to defund this program, because it'll make you vomit.)

And that's why I'm rather more intrigued by Jello Jay's bizarre performance on Tweety the other day than surprised.

Tweety: [Russell Tice] said that under the Bush Administration the NSA spied electronically on journalists. Do you know about that?

Jello Jay: I watched it, on your program, and I'm quite prepared to believe it. I mean, I think they went after anybody they could get. Including me.

Tweety: Okay. Incl—They didn't eavesdrop on you, did they Senator?

Jello Jay: No, and they sent me no letters.

Now, to be fair, the entire performance was rather bizarre; I think everyone in DC was acting drunk last week out of sheer exhaustion. That said, this exchange, set against the background of Jello Jay's efforts to establish a record labeling the warrantless wiretap program as TIA reincarnate, makes me wonder whether this wasn't more of a subconscious revelation: "They went after me. No, they didn't eavesdrop on me. They sent me no letters."

"They sent me no letters"???

What's that supposed to mean?

None of this, of course, explains why Jello Jay didn't waltz onto the immunity-protected Senate floor and reveal all this stuff on July 17, 2003, or in 2004, when it became clear BushCo had signing statemented away the Senate restrictions on TIA (which was, incidentally, about the time that Jim Comey was preparing to refuse to reauthorize the program).

But to his credit (yes, I'm giving Jello Jay a

bit of credit), Jello Jay was trying to get this information out in December 2005, just after the NYT broke this story.