

ILLEGAL WIRETAPPING ... STILL; BILL CLINTON'S EMAIL ACCESSED

Lichtblau and Risen are back with what feels like a quarterly update reporting that Americans are still being illegally surveilled.

Since April, when it was disclosed that the intercepts of some private communications of Americans went beyond legal limits in late 2008 and early 2009, several Congressional committees have been investigating. Those inquiries have led to concerns in Congress about the agency's ability to collect and read domestic e-mail messages of Americans on a widespread basis, officials said. Supporting that conclusion is the account of a former N.S.A. analyst who, in a series of interviews, described being trained in 2005 for a program in which the agency routinely examined large volumes of Americans' e-mail messages without court warrants. Two intelligence officials confirmed that the program was still in operation.

Both the former analyst's account and the rising concern among some members of Congress about the N.S.A.'s recent operation are raising fresh questions about the spy agency.

[snip]

He said he and other analysts were trained to use a secret database, code-named Pinwale, in 2005 that archived foreign and domestic e-mail messages. He said Pinwale allowed N.S.A. analysts to read large volumes of e-mail messages to and from Americans as long as they fell within certain limits – no more than 30 percent of any database search, he recalled being told – and Americans were

not explicitly singled out in the searches.

The former analyst added that his instructors had warned against committing any abuses, telling his class that another analyst had been investigated because he had improperly accessed the personal e-mail of former President Bill Clinton.

These reports feel so familiar. What is new, though, is that people like Rush Holt (who was quoted extensively in the article) are getting pissed enough that they're giving more details about the abuses in the program.