

TENET REFUSES TO DENY CIA USES JOURNALISM COVER-AND INFILTRATING AMERICAN GROUPS

There's a whole lot more that came out in today's document dump while I've been fighting about health care. Here are the set released in response to an EFF FOIA. As a number of outlets have reported, that set includes evidence the government was inappropriately surveilling domestic groups, including the Nation of Islam.

In the NYT's story on the dump, there's one more interesting bit: George Tenet refusing to issue a blanket denial that the US uses journalists as cover.

Among them was a letter written in 2002 by George J. Tenet, who was the director of the Central Intelligence Agency at the time, suggesting that a C.I.A. ban on using journalists as spies was not airtight.

After Islamic militants killed Daniel Pearl, a Wall Street Journal reporter whom they had falsely accused of working for the C.I.A., leaders of the American Society of Newspaper Editors asked Mr. Tenet to "declare unequivocally" that the agency's spies never posed as journalists.

Mr. Tenet replied that for 25 years, the agency's policy had been "that we do not use American journalists as agents or American news organizations for cover." But he refused to make what he described as "a blanket statement that we would never use journalistic cover."

Instead, he wrote, “the circumstances under which I would even consider any exception to this policy would have to be truly extraordinary.”

Note his emphasis on American journalistic outlets. Sounds like a giant loophole to me.