

THE SWIFT BATTLE HEATS UP

Last year, I tracked European objections to continued US access to SWIFT data. In November, some Germans balked at pushing an agreement through before the new European government was put into place. In December I described the interim agreement put into place until the new government can negotiate a new one.

Only the EU parliament is none too happy that deal was put into place on the eve of the new government. (h/t cw)

A panel of European Union lawmakers urged the EU to scrap an agreement on transferring bank data to U.S. counter-terrorism investigators, risking a security gap weeks after an attempt to bomb a trans-Atlantic flight. The European Parliament's civil-liberties committee said an accord under which the EU allows the U.S. Treasury Department to view records from the Swift global money-transfer system lacks adequate protection of personal data. The committee recommended today in Brussels that the full Parliament reject the agreement during a scheduled Feb. 11 vote.

Fighting terrorism "does not need to involve the endless erosion of civil liberties for whole swathes of innocent civilians," said Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, a Dutch member steering the issue through the 27-nation Parliament.

In response, the US—which, under Obama, is supposed to be engaging more closely with our allies—has threatened to take its toys and go home.

The United States has warned that it may stop working with EU institutions on

terrorist data exchange if the European Parliament next week blocks a bilateral deal on the issue.

“If the European parliament overturns the agreement, I am unsure whether Washington agencies would again decide to address this issue at EU level,” US ambassador to the EU William Kennard wrote in a letter sent to European Parliament President Jerzy Buzek, according to news agency AFP.

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton also called Buzek and EU foreign affairs chief Catherine Ashton to voice Washington’s concern over the issue.

At issue is European demands that its citizens have some civil liberties protections (far more than Americans have over their own bank data) and the EU itself have some transparency into the process. But apparently the US wants its deal upheld, even after the underhanded way it pushed it through.

Imagine that!?!? Legislators who actually do something about others bypassing their prerogatives.