

TO JUSTIFY DRAGNET, FBI IMPLIES IT CAN'T FILE 300 MORE NSLS IN A YEAR

So Mark Hosenball just reported this, uncritically.

The U.S. government only searched for detailed information on calls involving fewer than 300 specific phone numbers among the millions of raw phone records collected by the National Security Agency in 2012, according to a government paper obtained by Reuters on Saturday.

As Jim Sensenbrenner noted the other day, if the government is doing only what it says it is with the database – finding US persons who are in contact with suspected terrorists – the FBI could use a grand jury subpoena or a National Security Letter to do so. Collecting all the phone records of Americans would only be required if the FBI were doing so many checks such a process became onerous.

Except that the FBI routinely gets upwards of 10,000 NSLs a year. Adding these 300 would be a drop in the bucket.

So the difficulty of getting NSLs can't be the problem.

Which suggests the 300 claim is implicit acknowledgment they're doing something more with this data than they're letting on.