

DIANNE FEINSTEIN'S PRE-UNDIEBOMB THINKING

A whole bunch of people have pilloried Dianne Feinstein's defense of the phone dragnet and related programs.

But one bizarre argument I haven't seen challenged is the underlying logic of this passage.

The U.S. must remain vigilant against terrorist attacks against the homeland. Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), considered the world's most capable and dangerous terrorist organization, is determined to attack the United States. As we have seen since the "underwear bomber" attempted to blow up an airliner over Detroit on Christmas Day 2009, AQAP has developed nonmetallic bombs that can elude airport screeners, and the organization's expert bomb maker, Ibrahim al-Asiri, remains at large.

Asiri is believed to be behind the October 2010 plot to place bombs disguised as printer cartridges onto cargo planes headed for the U.S. He is also a suspect in the May 2012 suicide-bomber plot against an airliner headed for the U.S. that was foiled when U.S. authorities obtained the planned explosive device through good intelligence work.

Earlier this month, Director of National Intelligence James Clapper testified that in the case of the AQAP threat this summer, there were a number of phone numbers or emails "that emerged from our collection overseas that pointed to the United States." Fortunately, the NSA call-records program was used to check

those leads and determined that there was no domestic aspect to the plotting. [my emphasis]

So here's the logic.

UndieBomb 1.0 proves AQAP wants to attack the US.

UndieBomb 2.0 is further proof of that, although DiFi doesn't mention that it was a US-Saudi-Brit sting, meaning the intent came from us.

As part of the Legion of Doom investigation, NSA found phone numbers tied to the US that have, on investigation, proved to be unrelated to the actual alleged plot.

It's that same theory that 36,000 innocent people must be investigated every time a terrorist plots something to keep us "safe."

But let's take a step back. UndieBomb 1.0 ...
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Yes.

I remember now.

UndieBomb 1.0 was the guy who was allegedly plotting out Jihad with Anwar al-Awlaki – whose communications the FBI had two guys reading – over things like chats and calls. That is, Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab was a guy whose plot the NSA and FBI should have thwarted before he got on a plane. (To say nothing of the CIA and NCTC's fuck-ups.)

And yet, he got on that plane. His own incompetence and the quick work of passengers prevented that explosion, while a number of needles went unnoticed in the NSA's most closely watched haystacks.

Nevertheless, the lesson DiFi takes is that we need more haystacks.

Shouldn't the lessons of UndieBomb 1.0 be just as important to this debate as the partial, distorted, lessons of 9/11?