

NSA: THE HEGEMON'S ECONOMIC SPYING IS OKAY, UNLIKE THE CHALLENGER'S ECONOMIC SPYING

As part of an NYT story on implants the NSA has placed in 100,000 computers around the world, some of them via radio, it lists "trade institutions inside the European Union" among the targets for Computer Network Exploitation.

It must be particularly sensitive to that declaration above others, because the NSA spokesperson offers a tired excuse for why our economic spying is not bad, while China's is.

While refusing to comment on the scope of the Quantum program, the N.S.A. said its actions were not comparable to China's.

"N.S.A.'s activities are focused and specifically deployed against – and only against – valid foreign intelligence targets in response to intelligence requirements," Vanee Vines, an agency spokeswoman, said in a statement. "We do not use foreign intelligence capabilities to steal the trade secrets of foreign companies on behalf of – or give intelligence we collect to – U.S. companies to enhance their international competitiveness or increase their bottom line."

I wonder whether the people who parrot this line really have so little understanding of the distinctions between the way China's government presses its economic advantage and the way we do? I wonder if they've never seen cables showing our diplomats pressuring other countries in ways that benefit specific, named US

companies (or trade organizations), surely relying on intelligence gained from both SIGINT and HUMINT?

We are neither better or worse capitalists than China because of the way we spy. Both countries are cheating on behalf of ostensibly “national” companies (though cheating and illicitly gained intelligence are an established feature of even the best regulated markets).

For some reason the NSA thinks that so long as it doesn't spy on one of the few remaining areas where the US has the biggest competitive advantage – its Intellectual Property – its economic spying is morally better than China's economic spying.

That's nonsense. It's all cheating in the name of national strength. If it's acceptable for us to do it, we really can't perform moral outrage that our rivals are doing it.