

AND NOW THE COUNTERPROLIFERATION EXCUSE TO EXPAND THE DRAGNET

The other day I noted how Obama's speech set up terrorism, in the context of war, to justify the structure of the dragnet, then slipped cybersecurity into that framework without distinguishing what should be significantly different frameworks. Steven Aftergood reports that, in a new Defense Science Board report, DOD is attempting to do the same with counterproliferation. They recommend, in part, expanding the dragnet to the CP function.

The advances in persistent surveillance, automated tracking, rapid analyses of large and multi-source data sets, and open source analyses to support conventional warfighting and counterterrorism have not yet been exploited by the nuclear monitoring community... New intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) technologies, demonstrated in recent conflicts, offer significant promise for monitoring undesirable nuclear activity throughout the free world."

The National Security Agency, among others, has pointed the way, the reports suggested. A newly integrated global awareness system for counterproliferation should "build on lessons and experiences of successful national security capabilities, such as... NSA's counterterrorism capabilities..."

"The 'big data' technologies for extracting meaning from vast quantities of data that are being developed commercially in the information technology (IT) industry, and for other

purposes in DoD and the IC, need to be extended and applied to nuclear monitoring.”

Don't get me wrong. I'm not suggesting counterproliferation is not a totally legitimate intelligence objective.

But I find their claims that the threat of non-state actions is brand new, now, in 2014.

In short, for the first time since the early decades of the nuclear era, the nation needs to be equally concerned about both “vertical” proliferation (the increase in capabilities of existing nuclear states) and “horizontal” proliferation (an increase in the number of states and non-state actors possessing or attempting to possess nuclear weapons).

After all, the threat of non-state proliferation had been identified before 9/11, and it served as the rationale for a lot of what we have done since then. Has DSB been asleep for the last 15 years?

Moreover, counterproliferation has been built into the dragnet from the start, and was explicitly carved out in the 2008 FISA Amendments Act. It's fairly safe to presume that counterproliferation has always been one of the certifications under which FAA operates. It's already part of the dragnet.

Finally, some of the novel kinds of proliferation that are likely of greatest concern – Pakistan and Saudi Arabia and friends – already should fall under the aegis of counterterrorism spying anyway.

Is there a reason DSB is calling to expand a dragnet for CP purposes when the dragnet supposedly already includes it?