

MICHAEL HAYDEN'S MASTURBATORY CLAIMS OF DRAGNET EFFICACY

In a bid to extend a dragnet that has proven useless in the function the Intelligence Community claims it serves, Mitch McConnell is claiming there are secret reasons we need to keep the dragnet.

It's possible this is just a tactic, to gain leverage to make USA F-ReDux even worse.

It's possible that McConnell just wants to retain the dragnet to identify people to coerce into becoming informants, the use the FBI has claimed for the dragnet that never got included in its more public assessments of value.

It's possible McConnell wants to retain a dragnet – and finally expand it to include most Internet metadata – because he can (and all of our Five Eyes allies have done so in the wake of Snowden's leaks).

But I want to submit another possibility, based on the Stellar Wind IG Report.

In its assessment of the Stellar Wind dragnet – the same section that notes that 1.2% of all tips made a “significant” contribution to finding terrorists (and that measure included deporting suspected terrorists and identifying potential informants, not just identifying actual terrorists) and Internet dragnet tips had made no contribution – the report explained Michael Hayden's justification.

Hayden also observed that the enemy may not have been as embedded in the United States as much as feared but said that he believes Stellar Wind helped determine this.

[snip]

Other witnesses, such as General Hayden,

said that the value of the program may lie in its ability to help the Intelligence Community determine that the terrorist threat embedded within the country is not as great as once feared. (PDF 647, 664)

Now, remember, to justify operating this program in defiance of the law (and to justify getting FISC to rubber stamp it in 2004 in defiance of common sense), John Brennan and his colleagues would routinely write a “scary memo” to establish that the threat of a terrorist attack on the US was so big that the government needed the program. Probably, they used Khalid Sheikh Mohammed’s claim that he had gotten a Briton to recruit non-existent black Muslims in Montana to start forest fires for the 3 months of 2003 that CIA believed that ruse. We know in 2004, the CIA drummed up fear of an election year plot – seeded by a fabricator and sustained through CIA’s use of torture – to sustain the initial Internet dragnet order.

The point is, for the entire life of the dragnet, the government justified it by talking about scary terrorists embedded in the US.

And then, when challenged in 2009 to explain the value of the dragnet, Hayden explained that it was useful because it proved those claims of scary terrorists embedded in the US turned out to be overblown.

The best Hayden can offer – after years of overseeing a dragnet – is that it proved the IC’s overblown claims in the first place were overblown.

Behind all this dragnettery, then, lies a great deal of masturbatory fear-mongering.