

LINKS, JULY 18, 2011

Btw, DDay tells me I stole this idea from him. So I'm going to admit it fair and square that I did, indeed, take this idea partly from him.

Surveillance

The whistleblower who first tied Andy Coulson to the HackGate scandal, Sean Hure, was found dead in his home last night and the police are, for some reason, not treating the "unexplained" death as suspicious. I find that particularly curious given that Hure had just explained to the NYT and Guardian how News Corp journalists used cell phone data for geolocation, in much the same way our government secretly does under the PATRIOT Act.

Spencer has a really important article on TruePosition, one of the big players in geolocation. Of particular concern? It's part of Liberty Media, one of the big players in media consolidation.

Chris Soghoian warns that the security problem that Murdoch's minions used in HackGate may still exist on three US carriers—AT&T, T-Mobile, and Sprint. He reminds that when AT&T and T-Mobile got caught with an open back door to the kind of hacking Murdoch's minions used in the UK, they only had to reveal that vulnerability, not fix it.

Rule of Law

Thomas Drake was sentenced to a year of probation last Friday. Both the NYT and the Government Accountability Project describe the new asshole Judge Richard Bennett ripped William Welch and the government more generally for the way they treated Drake.

Remember Tim DeChristopher, the UT man who walked into a BLM auction and bid on land in an effort to prevent it from being drilled? In March, he was convicted of two counts of fraud. Bill McKibben writes about his upcoming

sentencing, wondering why DeChristopher will be punished but not the MOTUs who crashed our economy.

The head of Obama's Financial Task Force is leaving after 17 months on the job. Quick! Can you think of any high profile crime he has prosecuted?

Secrecy

Steven Aftergood reviews two of the snowflakes released in the latest batch of RummyLeaks, both address Rummy's view on secrecy. I'm particularly interested in the November 2, 2005 one where Rummy muses that the US government can't keep a secret. As Aftergood notes, Rummy doesn't say what secret he was worried about. But there are two that were about to break: news of the black sites (Dana Priest broke that story just days later and Carl Levin was looking into it), and the warrantless wiretap program.

Corporate Government

Last week, the Center for Media and Democracy rolled out an important new project, ALEC Exposed, chronicling the way that the American Legislative Exchange Council serves as a means for corporations to dictate legislative agenda at the state level. Here's DemocracyNow on some of what CMD discovered. John Nichols looks at how ALEC has tried to curtail democracy.

One of the things the corporatists are trying to do is cut back access to justice. As part of this, Republicans in Congress are trying to cut over a quarter of legal aid's funding. Adam Bonin has an update on what you can do to stop them.

The Empire and the Rest of the World

Josh Rogin reports on a letter a couple of Congresswomen sent to the PLO, warning that if they don't drop a plan to ask for a UN vote giving Palestine statehood, they'll lose US aid. This follows votes in both the House and Senate condemning the plan.

The perennial prediction of an impending Israeli attack on Iran continues, this time with a prediction from former spook Bob Baer. A big basis for recent claims of imminent attack—including this one—stems from warnings from former Mossad chief Meir Dagan. Needless to say, if the Israelis decide to attack Iran, they'll be doing it over the heads of Americans stationed in Iraq.

Via Steve Hynd, Nuri al-Maliki's got a new solution to his dilemma of whether to ask US troops to stay: to ask for mercs—er, um, trainers defended by mercs. That way Maliki can bypass his parliament without forgoing our footprint (and/or inviting us to bigfoot in the name of Iranian containment). Of particular note? The last line of the article, which emphasizes Iraq will continue to have US intelligence cooperation.

Eating the World

Mark Bittman links to this Environmental Working Group site that shows you how much better the globe would be if you ate lentils instead of cow. Among other things, it tracks the carbon footprint of 4 oz portions of a variety of foods.