

IF EVERYTHING NSA DOES IS “AUDITABLE,” WHY CAN’T NSA TELL US HOW MANY AMERICANS THEY’VE SPIED ON?

NSA Director Keith Alexander just said this to the hackers at DefCon (while wearing an absolutely ridiculous hacker costume):

“We get oversight by Congress, both intel committees and their congressional members and their staffs,” he continued, “so everything we do is auditable by them, by the FISA court ... and by the administration. And everything we do is accountable to them.... We are overseen by everybody. And I will tell you that those who would want to weave the story that we have millions or hundreds of millions of dossiers on people is absolutely false.”

But a month ago, Alexander’s Inspector General told Ron Wyden that an estimate of the number of people inside the United States who have had their communications collected or reviewed under the FISA Amendments Act “was beyond the capacity of his office.” Of note, the IG and NSA leadership—that is, presumably Alexander himself—claimed such a review would “violate the privacy of U.S. persons.”

I look forward to Ron Wyden’s response to Alexander’s seeming reversal on that earlier letter with claims of this unlimited auditability.