THE CLAPPER REVIEW: HOW TO FIRE 90% OF SYSADMINS?

Yesterday, I noted it took just 72 hours from Obama to turn an "independent" "outside" review of the government's SIGINT programs into the James Clapper Review of James Clapper's SIGINT Programs.

But many other commenters have focused on the changed description of the review's mandate. In his speech on Friday, Obama said the review would study, "how we can **maintain the trust of the people**, how we can make sure that there **absolutely is no abuse** in terms of how these surveillance technologies are used, ask **how surveillance impacts our foreign policy**."

On Monday, his instruction to James Clapper said the review would, "whether, in light of advancements in communications technologies, the United States employs its technical collection capabilities in a manner that optimally protects our national security and advances our foreign policy while appropriately accounting for other policy considerations, such as the **risk of unauthorized disclosure** and our **need to maintain the public trust**."

Both addressed public trust. But Monday's statement replaced a focus on "absolutely no abuse" with "risk of unauthorized disclosure."

Now, I'm not certain, but I'm guessing we all totally misunderstood (by design) Obama's promises on Friday.

The day before the President made those promises, after all, Keith Alexander made a different set of promises.

> "What we're in the process of doing — not fast enough — is reducing our system administrators by about 90 percent," he said.

> The remarks came as the agency is facing scrutiny after Snowden, who had been one of about 1,000 system administrators who help run the agency's networks, leaked classified details about surveillance programs to the press.
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> Before the change, "what we've done is we've put people in the loop of transferring data, securing networks and doing things that machines are probably better at doing," Alexander said.

We already know that NSA's plan to minimize the risk of unauthorized disclosure involves firing 900 SysAdmins (Bruce Schneier provides some necessary skepticism about the move). They probably believe that automating everything (including, presumably, the audit-free massaging of the metadata dragnet data before analysts get to it) will ensure there "absolutely is no abuse."

And by turning the review intended to placate the civil libertarians into the review that will come up with the brilliant idea of putting HAL in charge of spying, the fired SysAdmins might just blame the civil libertarians.

So this review we all thought might improve privacy? Seems, instead, designed to find ways to fire more people faster.