

READING COMPREHENSION CAN BE FUN

Summary: In this post, I review Jason Leopold's claim that Bush authorized domestic surveillance before 9/11. Leopold relies heavily on a December 2000 document to make his claim and cites it out of context. He includes three other sources to support his claim, but these sources are talking about different programs, not the domestic surveillance program James Risen first exposed. While Leopold collects several incidences of disconcerting surveillance, he doesn't prove his central claim, purportedly disproving that Bush started the Risen program in response to 9/11.

Jason Leopold came out with what seemed to be a real scoop yesterday—the news that Bush ordered NSA surveillance of Americans **before** 9/11. Leopold quotes "people who worked at the NSA as encryption specialists" and James Risen's book, but most of his scoop relies on a declassified agency report called "Transitions 2001." Now frankly, two of the quotes Leopold includes refute the claim that the NSA was illegally spying. For example, Leopold cites...

Director of the National Security Agency is obligated by law to keep Congress fully and currently formed of intelligence activities.

...and later cites NSA's limitations under the Fourth Amendment (see below). But Leopold suggests the citations from the document support his contention that:

the document contradicts [Bush's] assertion that the 9/11 attacks prompted him to take the unprecedented step of signing a secret executive order authorizing the NSA to monitor a select number of American citizens thought to

█ have ties to terrorist groups.