

TSP TIMING, AGAIN

Josh and Spencer are just now catching up to something I pointed out three weeks ago: Tom DeLay got briefed on the TSP program on March 11, 2004, the day after the Hospital Meeting. Of course, that's not particularly surprising since one of the things that went down at the briefing of the Gang of Eight on March 10 is that the Administration floated passing legislation to fix the problems in the program. In March 2004, if you wanted legislation of any kind to pass Congress—and particularly if you wanted a second opinion about passing legislation if others had told you it'd be impossible—you'd ask the Hammer. Which is almost certainly what they did.

I'm frankly a lot more interested in whether what DeLay told the Administration contributed to the fact that Bush agreed to make changes after Mueller and Comey talked to him directly on March 12. That is, would Bush have made the same concessions on the 12th if he hadn't first spoken to the Hammer and learned he really did need to make those concessions?

Now that Josh and Spencer are looking at the timing of these briefings, though, they might want to check out the coincidence between the note that Jay Rockefeller sent to Dick Cheney and the briefing immediately proceeding the one on March 10. Because then they might discover that Rockefeller had raised the specific issue of massive data-mining with Cheney, effectively telling Cheney he thought the warrantless wiretapping program he had just been briefed on sounded a lot like the Total Information Awareness program that Congress was in the process of defunding. Without understanding that a Member of Congress had already told the Administration their program was probably illegal according to the terms laid out by Congress, you're probably still missing a critical element of the Hospital Meeting.