

SECURITY CLEARANCES TWO

I'm stuck between three gallons of canned tomatoes, a soon-to-be gallon of canned peaches, and a big pot of borscht. Which means I'm too hot to deal with the Padilla verdict yet. So instead I'm going to point out that my reading of Gonzales' correction from a few weeks ago was correct. Back then I said:

But here's an interesting detail about the hospital visit:

I also recall that, prior to the time I departed, General Ashcroft briefly mentioned a concern about security clearances for members of his staff regarding the NSA activities that were the subject of the presidential order.

I find this interesting for several reasons. First, it suggests that Ashcroft was complaining that his staffers weren't given security clearances to be read into this program. Recall that Bush refused to give some Office of Professional Responsibilities investigators security clearances, which meant they couldn't investigate the program. We also know that Cheney and Addington were working directly with John Yoo, bypassing Ashcroft, to pull off their shredding of the Constitution. But this detail suggests they were also shrouding their program by preventing top DOJ officials from getting security clearances.

I'm also struck that Gonzales felt like he needed to clarify this point. Is this something that Comey—or Ashcroft himself—already testified to the Senate

about? And what precisely was the issue? Why was it so important that Ashcroft was talking about it from his ICU bed?

Finally, why didn't Gonzales mention it the first time. Was this something else he was trying to hide?

Well, here's the relevant detail from Mueller's notes:

The AG also told [Card and Gonzales] that he was barred from obtaining the advice he needed on the program by the strict compartmentalization rules of the WH.

Pretty remarkable time for Ashcroft to raise the issue with Card and Gonzales, huh? From the ICU ward? It's also remarkable how similar this complaint is to Jay Rockefeller's complaint about the program, that he couldn't get the advice he needed because of the secrecy rules.