

BUSHCO ROLLED OUT A PARADE OF LIARS TO SQUELCH LICHTBLAU, RISEN & NYT

A fairly significant article just posted at Slate by Eric Lichtblau on the jaded history of the publication, and withholding of publication for well over a year, of his and Jim Risen's seminal story on the criminal warrantless wiretapping by the Bush Administration. Some of it we knew, some of it we guessed and some of it is first impression. As a whole however, it is stunning to digest.

For 13 long months, we'd held off on publicizing one of the Bush administration's biggest secrets. Finally, one afternoon in December 2005, as my editors and I waited anxiously in an elegantly appointed sitting room at the White House, we were again about to let President Bush's top aides plead their case: why our newspaper shouldn't let the public know that the president had authorized the National Security Agency, in apparent contravention of federal wiretapping law, to eavesdrop on Americans without court warrants.

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As the door to the conference room opened, however, a slew of other White House VIPs strolled out to greet us, with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice near the head of the receiving line and White House Counsel Harriet Miers at the back.

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The risk to national security was incalculable, the White House VIPs said, their voices stern, their faces drawn. "The enemy," one official warned, "is inside the gates." The clichés did their work; the message was unmistakable: If

the New York Times went ahead and published this story, we would share the blame for the next terrorist attack.

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That shared skepticism would prove essential in the Times' decision to run the story about Bush's NSA wiretapping program. On that December afternoon in the White House, the gathered officials attacked on several fronts. There was never any serious legal debate within the administration about the legality of the program, Bush's advisers insisted. The Justice Department had always signed off on its legality, as required by the president. The few lawmakers who were briefed on the program never voiced any concerns. From the beginning, there were tight controls in place to guard against abuse. The program would be rendered so ineffective if disclosed that it would have to be shut down immediately.

All these assertions, as my partner Jim Risen and I would learn in our reporting, turned out to be largely untrue.

Go read the entire article, it and you deserve nothing less. There was one great little aside that is absolutely priceless. What do you think the Secret Service was doing in the days and weeks before 9/11? Heh heh, well this:

... extraordinary diplomatic maneuverings the U.S. Secret Service had arranged with their Mexican counterparts to allow Jenna Bush, then 19, to make a barhopping trip south of the border. (She had just been charged with underage drinking in Texas.)

So, clearly, George Bush and his government was focused on what was important, at least to a blue blood, self centered, slacker chump. Just not so much on the well being of the United

States and the safety of it's citizens from terrorism.