

NO ONE COULD HAVE IMAGINED AN IG REPORT ON WARRANTLESS WIRETAPPING WOULD SUCK

In an article claiming, inaccurately, that few people noticed the debates over the requirement for an Inspector General's report on the illegal warrantless wiretap program...

The little-noticed provision for a public inspectors-general report was crucial to gaining the support of some liberal Democrats—including Sen. Barack Obama—for last summer's bill, which allowed a modified version of the program to continue.

...and along with the news that the CIA Inspector General John Helgerson—who will be managing this investigation—did not submit an unclassified report that was not required by the law...

But when the inspectors general recently submitted their first "interim" report to Congress under the measure, it wasn't made public. Instead, the brief document, written by CIA inspector general John Helgerson, was marked classified—a move that has drawn a stiff protest from House Intelligence Committee Chairman Silvestre Reyes.

Isikoff and Hosenball reveal what I argued some time ago—there are functional problems having an IG conduct this investigation instead of (as the House originally demanded) an independent commission with subpoena power. Most importantly, while Inspectors General of the relevant agencies can inspect their own agencies, they've got no jurisdiction to

investigate the White House.

Reyes's letter also included a request that the inspectors general issue a "preservation order" preventing White House or intelligence community officials from removing or destroying documents relating to the warrantless-surveillance program. With barely three months left in the administration, Reyes wanted to make sure that "they don't destroy anything before they walk out the door," Littig says.

[snip]

As for the demands for a preservation order, the official said: "Directives have been issued to preserve records relating to this surveillance program. But, as Congress is aware, intelligence community inspectors general have clearly defined authorities. **Those authorities don't, as a rule, extend to giving orders to the White House.**" [my emphasis]

And as we know—from Barton Gellman's Angler among other sources—most of this stuff is safely in Cheney's man-sized safe in the White House. And as we saw with Glenn Fine's investigation into the US Attorney firings, the White House can blow off the Inspectors General with glee.

Golly. Who would have imagined that an IG report on warrantless wiretapping wouldn't accomplish what it was promised to accomplish???