

WHY THE SILENCE ON TICE'S REVELATIONS?

Eric Alterman and George Zornick ask a very good question. Why hasn't the press—aside from MSNBC—covered Russell Tice's revelations?

Neither Tice nor his charges were discussed in the *Times*, either in print or online. This was standard across much of the mainstream media—*The Washington Post*, *Los Angeles Times*, *USA Today*, and *Associated Press* have all remained completely silent about Tice's allegations. And in one of his many, many “legacy” interviews, Bush told Fox's Brett Baier in December that they were simply “listening to a phone call from a known terrorist.” He was not challenged on this point during that interview, nor any other of which we are aware.

Of course, this is hardly the first time that the mainstream media has looked the other way toward NSA spying. The NSA's surveillance of U.N. diplomats in New York before the invasion of Iraq didn't get much mainstream attention when the story broke (in Britain), nor since. But one might imagine that the direct spying on journalists themselves would excite more attention, particularly given the self-interested aspects of the question and the constitutional complications it raises. Tice's tantalizing tip was mentioned again on Rachel Maddow's show, as well on Chris Matthews', and Michael Calderone blogged about it on the *Politico*. But that's it.

Clearly something deeply disturbing lurks beneath these revelations, and with Bush gone from office, it's hard to understand just what is preventing journalists from seeking the truth about

this program more energetically. The only thing they have to fear is fear itself.

Fear itself. Or, perhaps, fear that whatever got collected from them through the program will be used against them.

I keep thinking about the first journalist whose call records BushCo collected: John Solomon, back in spring 2001. Since the time when the Bush Administration subpoenaed Solomon's phone records—and didn't tell him until several months later—Solomon has been very credulous of right wing talking points, even while proclaiming his freedom from all bias. Now he heads up the news at that noted propaganda organ, the Moonie Times. Sure, maybe Solomon would have followed that same trajectory anyway.

But I do wonder whether the process of sweeping up journalists' phone records is just the first step in acquiring some very complacent journalists?