

JOHN BRENNAN GIVES GONZALES-LIKE ANSWER ON ILLEGAL SURVEILLANCE PROGRAM

Or perhaps worse than Alberto Gonzales.

At John Brennan's speech today, Spencer asked a question I've been hoping to have clarified since the IG Report revealed that two departments Brennan managed were in charge of targeting for Bush's illegal surveillance program.

So today I asked Brennan: in light of the IGs report, what was his role, if any, in the domestic surveillance activities of the Bush administration? Here's his answer, in full:

I fulfilled all my responsibilities at NCTC [National Counterterrorism Center] that I was asked to fulfill. And there are a number of different programs, some of which have come out in the press, some of which have not. Some of the things that have come out in the press have been inaccurate in terms of the representations there. And when I look back in terms of my service at the NCTC and those places I believe I fulfilled those responsibilities to the best of my abilities.

These issues related to the so-called domestic surveillance programs and other things – one of the things I mentioned, there's a lot of hyperbole and

misrepresentations about what actually happened. And a lot of times people go down certain roads believing reports as facts. And that's not the case. So I'm not going to go into sort of what my role was in that instance because a lot of those activities are still considered classified and not in the public domain, irrespective of what the press reports might be out there.

Brennan is either conflating unspecified inaccurate press reports with the inspectors general report or he's challenging the inspectors general report itself.

Brennan seems to be doing two things. First, he's using the same tactic adopted by Gonzales when he dodged questions about Bush's illegal spying program by playing semantics about whether there was one program or many. Gonzales claimed there was no disagreement about the program by segmenting off the actual wiretapping of targets from the data mining which—the IG Report seems to confirm—was the key issue in the dispute. By claiming the Terrorist Surveillance Program was distinct from the data mining, then, Gonzales got away with claiming under oath that there had been no dispute.

Here, Brennan is suggesting **either** that the aspects of the program that have come out in the press aren't the aspects he was involved in, **or** that the reporting on it has been inaccurate. Or rather, "either" ... "and/or." No matter which conjunction you use, he's avoiding admitting he was involved in Bush's illegal surveillance program by simply claiming the parts he was involved in haven't been accurately portrayed, if they've been portrayed at all.

But worse than Gonzales, Brennan is making an

appeal to following orders.

I fulfilled all my responsibilities at NCTC [National Counterterrorism Center] that I was asked to fulfill. ... And when I look back in terms of my service at the NCTC and those places I believe I fulfilled those responsibilities to the best of my abilities.

We don't really give a goddamn whether you fulfilled all the orders Dick Cheney gave you, Mr. Brennan. We want to know how many of those orders were illegal. How many of those orders did you know to be illegal?