

THE NYPD WILL RECORD YOUR OPPOSITION TO DRONE STRIKES

One of the most fascinating moments in the deposition of the NYPD's Intelligence Chief, Thomas Galati, comes when he discusses what kinds of political conversations might be recorded by the NYPD.

A I would say that if there was an event in the world that resulted in some type of violence or disruption, anywhere in the World or within the state that was related to terrorism activity, yes, they would go. They would basically see if it's going to have any implications in New York City.

Q Would it be fair to say that their job was to see whether people were talking about it and how people were talking about it?

MR. FARRELL: Objection.

A Their job was, if they hear people talking about it, you know, they should inform us. If what they're hearing is hostility towards the United States or to the general public at large, you know, as a result of these events, would something happen here as a result? Their job is to listen for that.

This, of course, is dangerous ground for the NYPD, as it suggests the Department is recording people's protected right to oppose policies of the US. Presumably seeing that danger, Galati dodges the next question, whether all it takes is to express political opposition to US policies to get your opinions recorded by the Department. Rather than answer, he suggests it doesn't have to do exclusively with opinions about US actions.

Q You used the word hostility towards the United States. I want to make sure that I don't misunderstand you.

A lot of people talk. They don't like what's going on, what this person is doing, they don't like what the United States is doing.

Are you talking as broadly as the hostility in the United States, in the sense of expressions of opinions that were contrary to the policies of the United States –

MR. FARRELL: Objection.

Q – or objected to the policies of the United States?

A I would say that it doesn't even have to involve the United States at all; its general policing to prevent violence.

But then Galiti offers up an example of a US-related world event in response to which the NYPD might send people out to listen how people respond. That event? Drone strikes.

If we deployed them because of an event that took place in a particular part of the World, a drone attack, we would want to know and we would instruct them that people are upset about this drone attack. If they are, that's something that would be important for us to know, that would be something we would want to know.

At one level, the NYPD actually has reason to want to know when people are pissed off about drone strikes. After all, one of the two real terrorists to attempt to attack NYC since 9/11, Faisal Shahzad, was motivated by the drone strikes in Pakistan.

Contrary to what John Brennan likes to claim, drones really have motivated people—even one in

the vicinity of NYC—to become terrorists.

That said, there are a lot of people who express opposition to drone strikes—even ones that take out horrible people like Anwar al-Awlaki. The vast majority of those people will never consider terrorism in response to America's use of drones.

But that doesn't mean a record of your opinion won't be in a computer at the NYPD.