

CLAPPER COULDN'T EVEN DO BETTER THAN "LEAST UNTRUTHFUL" WITH A DAY'S NOTICE

As I noted yesterday, when Andrea Mitchell asked James Clapper about his lie to Ron Wyden earlier this year, Clapper offered a baloney answer, admitting both that he gave the "least untruthful" answer and that he had been "too cute by half."

First— as I said, I have great respect for Senator Wyden. I thought, though in retrospect, I was asked— "When are you going to start— stop beating your wife" kind of question, which is meaning not— answerable necessarily by a simple yes or no. So I responded in what I thought was the most truthful, or least untruthful manner by saying no.

[snip]

And this has to do with of course somewhat of a semantic, perhaps some would say too— too cute by half. But it is— there are honest differences on the semantics of what— when someone says "collection" to me, that has a specific meaning, which may have a different meaning to him. [my emphasis]

It was such a terrible response to Mitchell's question, for ten whole minutes I wished Rahm Emanuel were back in the White House to rip Clapper to shreds for such a media fail.

But what makes Clapper's answer — and his retroactive explanations for it — far, far worse is that Ron Wyden gave him a day to figure out how to answer.

One of the most important responsibilities a Senator has is

oversight of the intelligence community. This job cannot be done responsibly if Senators aren't getting straight answers to direct questions. When NSA Director Alexander failed to clarify previous public statements about domestic surveillance, it was necessary to put the question to the Director of National Intelligence. So that he would be prepared to answer, I sent the question to Director Clapper's office a day in advance. [my emphasis]

And after Clapper lied to Wyden's face, Wyden gave him a chance to amend it, which he did not take.

After the hearing was over my staff and I gave his office a chance to amend his answer. Now public hearings are needed to address the recent disclosures and the American people have the right to expect straight answers from the intelligence leadership to the questions asked by their representatives. [my emphasis]

Wyden is making it clear: this was a deliberate, knowing lie to Congress. And no one wants to talk about it.

Which, as Wyden further notes, undermines any pretense that Congress exercise adequate oversight over the Executive Branch.