

THE 3 HOP SCOTCH OF CIVIL LIBERTIES AND PRIVACY

I was in court, so I didn't see it, but apparently there was a little hearing over at House Judiciary Committee this morning on "Oversight of the Administration's Use of FISA Authorities". There was an august roll of Administration authorities and private experts: Mr. James Cole, United States Department of Justice; Mr. John C. Inglis, National Security Agency; Mr. Robert S. Litt, ODNI; Ms. Stephanie Douglas, FBI National Security Branch; Mr. Stewart Baker; Mr. Steven G. Bradbury; Mr. Jameel Jaffer; and Ms. Kate Martin.

Hmmm, let's take a look and see if anything interesting occurred (as reported by Pete Yost of AP). Uh, well, there was THIS:

For the first time, NSA deputy director John C. Inglis disclosed Wednesday that the agency sometimes conducts what's known as three-hop analysis. That means the government can look at the phone data of a suspect terrorist, plus the data of all of his contacts, then all of those people's contacts, and finally, all of those people's contacts.

If the average person calls 40 unique people, three-hop analysis could allow the government to mine the records of 2.5 million Americans when investigating one suspected terrorist.

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The government says it stores everybody's phone records for five years. Cole explained that because the phone companies don't keep records that long, the NSA had to build its own database.

Go read all of Yost's report, there is quite a

bit in there that is stunning in the blithe attitude the Administration takes on this hoovering of data and personal information. Also clear: Congress has no real grasp or control of the government's actions. The Article I brakes are out and the Article II car is accelerating and careening down the road.