# IGNATIUS HAS BECOME A "CHOICE BETWEEN SECURITY AND PRIVACY" STENOGRAPHER

David Ignatius should be ashamed about this column. Even by his standards, it serves simply as stenography for the buzzwords top security officials have fed him, such that he repeats lines like this without any critical thinking.

> Gen. Keith Alexander and other top NSA officials are considering ways they could reassure the public without damaging key programs, according to U.S. officials. They think that **forcing Congress to decide between security and privacy is an unfair choice, since the country would lose either way**. They'd like an agreement that protects both, but that's a tall order. [my emphasis]

Remember: we're talking about the Section 215 dragnet, not the (according to all players) far more valuable Section 702 collection. Even according to the government, it has only come into play in 13 terrorist cases. The only one the government can describe where it has been crucial involves indicting a man the FBI determined was not motivated by terrorism but rather tribal affiliation sending less than $10,000 to al-Shabaab three and a half years earlier.

And yet Ignatius uncritically repeats that requiring the government to use more specificity with its collections would present Congress the "unfair choice" of "deciding between security and privacy."

So it should be no surprise that Ignatius uncritically repeats other details of the

program. For example, Ignatius claims this involves only two-hop analysis, when we know it can go three hops (and therefore millions of people) deep.

> When the agency identifies a suspicious number in, say, Pakistan, analysts want to see who that person called in the United States and who, in turn, might have been contacted by that second person.

Ignatius doesn't note the descriptions — from both Edward Snowden and James Clapper — that they then use this metadata to index previously collected communications. That's because he's too busy repeating that we don't "record" these collections, as if we'd have to.

Then finally there's Ignatius' claim that SWIFT (the record of international financial transfers) presents a viable alternative to the dragnet program. As I have reported, when the EU finally got to audit what the US had been doing with SWIFT, they discovered the real content of the queries was transmitted verbally, making it impossible to audit the use.

Thus far, no one has explained whether the queries and underlying articulable suspicion gets automatically recorded or — as happened with one of the precursors to this program — manually in hardcopy form. If it's the latter (which I will assume until someone asserts differently) it is prone to the same kind of large scale documentation lapses that could hide a great deal of improper use of the dragnet. Which, given Ron Wyden and Mark Udall's insistence that the problems have been more problematic than James Clapper lets on, could well be the case.

All of these are issues anyone with Ignatius' access might want to answer.

Alternately, that access may now serve to do no more than produce "security or privacy" automatons, repeating the obviously false cant

Ignatius has here.