

ALL THREE BRANCHES CONDUCT VAUNTED NSA OVERSIGHT!

Today, we learned this is what the vaunted Congressional oversight of NSA spying looks like.

Senate Intelligence Committee Chairman Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.), who did not receive a copy of the 2012 audit [showing thousands of violations] until The Post asked her staff about it, said in a statement late Thursday that the committee “can and should do more to independently verify that NSA’s operations are appropriate, and its reports of compliance incidents are accurate.”

We learned this is what the vaunted FISA Court oversight of NSA spying looks like.

The chief judge of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court said the court lacks the tools to independently verify how often the government’s surveillance breaks the court’s rules that aim to protect Americans’ privacy. Without taking drastic steps, it also cannot check the veracity of the government’s assertions that the violations its staff members report are unintentional mistakes.

“The FISC is forced to rely upon the accuracy of the information that is provided to the Court,” its chief, U.S. District Judge Reggie Walton, said in a written statement to The Washington Post. “The FISC does not have the capacity to investigate issues of noncompliance, and in that respect the FISC is in the same position as any other court when it comes to enforcing

[government] compliance with its orders.”

We learned this is what the vaunted internal NSA oversight of NSA spying looks like.

The NSA uses the term “incidental” when it sweeps up the records of an American while targeting a foreigner or a U.S. person who is believed to be involved in terrorism. Official guidelines for NSA personnel say that kind of incident, pervasive under current practices, “does not constitute a . . . violation” and “does not have to be reported” to the NSA inspector general for inclusion in quarterly reports to Congress. Once added to its databases, absent other restrictions, the communications of Americans may be searched freely.

In one required tutorial, NSA collectors and analysts are taught to fill out oversight forms without giving “extraneous information” to “our FAA overseers.” FAA is a reference to the FISA Amendments Act of 2008, which granted broad new authorities to the NSA in exchange for regular audits from the Justice Department and the office of the Director of National Intelligence and periodic reports to Congress and the surveillance court.

Using real-world examples, the “Target Analyst Rationale Instructions” explain how NSA employees should strip out details and substitute generic descriptions of the evidence and analysis behind their targeting choices.

Vaunted. For well over 2 months. This is what they’ve been hailing.