

BILL BINNEY TOLD YOU SO

Remember when Bill Binney said NSA was compiling dossiers of Americans, but Keith Alexander said that wasn't true?

A former NSA official has accused the NSA's director of deception during a speech he gave at the DefCon hacker conference on Friday when he asserted that the agency does not collect files on Americans.

William Binney, a former technical director at the NSA, said during a panel discussion that NSA Director Gen. Keith Alexander was playing a "word game" and that the NSA was indeed collecting e-mails, Twitter writings, internet searches and other data belonging to Americans and indexing it.

"Unfortunately, once the software takes in data, it will build profiles on everyone in that data," he said. "You can simply call it up by the attributes of anyone you want and it's in place for people to look at."

[snip]

Binney was contradicting statements made on Friday by Alexander, who told the crowd of hackers and security professionals that his agency "absolutely" does not maintain files on Americans.

"And anybody who would tell you that we're keeping files or dossiers on the American people," Alexander continued, "knows that's not true."

The tantalizing reporting duo of Laura Poitras and James Risen (writing at NYT) report the NSA is ... compiling graphs that show Americans'

connections with foreign targets, using both communications metadata and public resources like bank, insurance, Facebook, flight, voting property, and GPS information.

Since 2010, the National Security Agency has been exploiting its huge collections of data to create sophisticated graphs of some Americans' social connections that can identify their associates, their locations at certain times, their traveling companions and other personal information, according to newly disclosed documents and interviews with officials.

[snip]

The policy shift was intended to help the agency "discover and track" connections between intelligence targets overseas and people in the United States, according to an N.S.A. memorandum from January 2011. The agency was authorized to conduct "large-scale graph analysis on very large sets of communications metadata without having to check foreignness" of every e-mail address, phone number or other identifier, the document said. Because of concerns about infringing on the privacy of American citizens, the computer analysis of such data had previously been permitted only for foreigners.

The agency can augment the communications data with material from public, commercial and other sources, including bank codes, insurance information, Facebook profiles, passenger manifests, voter registration rolls and GPS location information, as well as property records and unspecified tax data, according to the documents. They do not indicate any restrictions on the use of such "enrichment" data, and

several former senior Obama administration officials said the agency drew on it for both Americans and foreigners.

It sure sounds like a dossier to me.

But then, the safe bet was always to assume Keith Alexander (and James Clapper, who also denied this) was lying.