

OBAMA'S PANOPTICON

It seems the Administration has declared today "Power Grab Monday."

Charlie Savage reports that the government is again asking for a "technical fix" (as they have during PATRIOT debates) that extends CALEA to cover all the Toobz.

Federal law enforcement and national security officials are preparing to seek sweeping new regulations for the Internet, arguing that their ability to wiretap criminal and terrorism suspects is "going dark" as people increasingly communicate online instead of by telephone.

Essentially, officials want Congress to require all services that enable communications – including encrypted e-mail transmitters like BlackBerry, social networking Web sites like Facebook and software that allows direct "peer to peer" messaging like Skype – to be technically capable of complying if served with a wiretap order. The mandate would include being able to intercept and unscramble encrypted messages.

And Ellen Nakashima reports an effort to create what sounds like a US version of SWIFT, covering all international transactions, no matter how small.

The Obama administration wants to require U.S. banks to report all electronic money transfers into and out of the country, a dramatic expansion in efforts to counter terrorist financing and money laundering.

Officials say the information would help them spot the sort of transfers that helped finance the al-Qaeda hijackers who carried out the Sept. 11, 2001,

attacks. They say the expanded financial data would allow anti-terrorist agencies to better understand normal money-flow patterns so they can spot abnormal activity.

Financial institutions are now required to report to the Treasury Department transactions in excess of \$10,000 and others they deem suspicious. The new rule would require banks to disclose even the smallest transfers.

Any communication you make, any financial transaction you make, the Obama Administration thinks nine years after 9/11 is the time to demand such access.

I suspect it's only the corporations can save us from this power grab. Not only are corporations doing business in the US not going to want all their transactions accessible by the government (we've already stolen enough corporate secrets), but banks aren't going to want to track transactions at that level.

Though who knows? Maybe the corporations are ready to join Obama's panopticon?