

SHORTER WAPO: IT WOULD TAKE MONTHS TO KNOW ABOUT SPYING MISCONDUCT

For what it's worth, I consider reports that the government doesn't know what Edward Snowden took to be disinformation. And indeed, claims to that effect in this WaPo article are sourced to: "one former government official," a "former senior U.S. official," and "a former senior U.S. intelligence official who served in Russia." There's also "a senior intelligence official" who says only it'll take months to complete the damage assessment on Snowden's materials, which is different from claiming (as the other sources do) that Russia and China have what he took. And a "second senior intelligence official" who fearmongers improbably about how much easier this will make things on the terrorists.

But ultimately, most of the people claiming NSA doesn't know what Snowden took are former officials, presumably out of the loop on such issues (unless, of course, they're Booz Allen Hamilton revolving doormen).

Funny thing is, if all that were true – if the government is still struggling to figure out what Snowden took a month after he left NSA – it indicates that the government would not know if a Sysadmin at the NSA had spied on Americans, if ever, until months after someone did so.

But, promise, this giant dragnet is secure.

Update: Mark Hosenball's version of this apparently organized leak (his is sourced to "several U.S. officials," "one non-government source familiar with Snowden's materials," and "2 U.S. national security sources," makes it fairly clear the government intends to release this disinformation – along with incorrect claims about the history of WikiLeaks – as a way to fearmonger about that connection.

Although WikiLeaks initially made the diplomatic cables available to media outlets, including the Guardian and New York Times, who redacted potentially sensitive information before publishing them, the website eventually released an entirely unredacted archive of the material, to the dismay of the Obama Administration. U.S. officials said the information put sources at risk and damaged relations with foreign governments.

The disinformation people spreading this story apparently are less worried about confirming genuine concerns about the security of these programs than they are about trying to catch up to WikiLeaks involvement with a new line of fearmongering.

Update: I changed the title of this after it was published.