

# DOES THIS PROVIDE INSIGHT INTO OBAMA'S RELATIVE SILENCE?

The US Ambassador to Britain, Matthew Barzun, went on the Beeb and declined to criticize Edward Snowden.

Asked if he shared the UK security services' concerns about the threat to national security from the leaks, he said he wanted to focus on the "importance of having this debate about what the trade-offs are between security and privacy, between transparency and secrecy, and to do so in a way that protects whistleblowers – which is different, by the way, from wholesale releasing of information, hundreds of thousands of documents".

This is a remarkable statement from someone at the heart of what must be touchy relations between the NSA and GCHQ and the US and Brits more generally (if complaints about prior US leaks serve as predictor).

Moreover, it might vocalize some of the reluctance on President Obama's part to aggressively defend the NSA's violation of laws authorizing surveillance.

Don't get me wrong. I don't believe Obama welcomes any real debate. The conduct James Clapper's Committee to Make Us Love the Dragnet makes that all too clear. Rather, I suspect Obama believes he can win the debate, and convince us all that we need an even bigger dragnet. (Which might explain the inclusion of Cass Sunstein on the Committee to Make Us Love the Dragnet.)

I suspect Obama, having been convinced by partial briefings the dragnet is great for America, also believes he can persuade the rest

of us (who aren't stuck in his partial briefing bubble) to love it too.

Certainly, his Ambassador to Britain seems to have been permitted to adopt the same stance.