

THE SCHNEIER BRIEFING: SOME OBSERVATIONS

6 Congresspersons and a security researcher walk into an unsecure room. ... And that's the best briefing they can get on some of the things NSA might be doing.

This morning I spent an hour in a closed room with six Members of Congress: Rep. Lofgren, Rep. Sensenbrenner, Rep. [Bobby] Scott, Rep. Goodlate, Rep. [Mike] Thompson, and Rep. Amash. No staffers, no public: just them. Lofgren asked me to brief her and a few Representatives on the NSA. She said that the NSA wasn't forthcoming about their activities, and they wanted me – as someone with access to the Snowden documents – to explain to them what the NSA was doing. Of course I'm not going to give details on the meeting, except to say that it was candid and interesting. And that it's extremely freaky that Congress has such a difficult time getting information out of the NSA that they have to ask me. I really want oversight to work better in this country.

I'm as intrigued by the make-up of the group as I am by the fact they needed to do this.

Schneier makes it clear that Lofgren – who is not only a strong supporter of civil liberties, but also happens to represent Silicon Valley – set up the briefing. In addition to her House Judiciary Committee colleagues Sensenbrenner, Scott, and Goodlatte, she invited Amash (who's not on the Committee but a loud defender of civil liberties – thanks, my Rep!), and N and E Bay Area ~~Republican~~ Democratic colleague Mike Thompson, who's not a member of the Committee either, but is a member of the Intelligence

Committee.

As I've noted, Goodlatte is not a named sponsor of USA Freedom; neither is Thompson (though Schneier describes them as all people who want to "rein in the NSA").

And yet these are the individuals whom Lofgren chose to bring to this briefing.

Schneier, of course, is not focused on the actual spying that NSA is doing, but on the corruption of encryption, a threat to the business model of Lofgren's district. [See Saul's well-take correction here.]

Also note, while I've got real worries about some opponents to reining in the NSA in the Senate, I do think people are not considering the significance of the House Judiciary Chair, who voted against Amash-Conyers, increasingly complaining about the NSA.

I'm not sure what the best way to stop the NSA from making us all less safe (especially since NSA has apparently not even told HPSCI members what they're doing). But I gather than Lofgren is trying to figure out a way to do so.