

WYDEN AND UDALL WANT OBAMA TO ADMIT TO SECRET COLLECTION PROGRAM

Ron Wyden and Mark Udall have an amendment to the PATRIOT Act that makes it clear the Obama Administration briefed the Intelligence Committees in February on an intelligence collection program, conducted under PATRIOT authority, that interprets the language of the law so broadly as to mean something it really doesn't say. The amendment reads, in part,

(6) United States Government officials should not secretly reinterpret public laws and statutes in a manner that is inconsistent with the public's understanding of these laws, and should not describe the execution of these laws in a way that misinforms or misleads the public;

(7) On February 2, 2011, the congressional intelligence committees received a secret report from the Attorney General and the Director of National Intelligence that has been publicly described as pertaining to intelligence collection authorities that are subject to expiration under section 224 of the USA PATRIOT Act (Public Law 107-56; 115 Stat. 295); and

(8) while it is entirely appropriate for particular intelligence collection techniques to be kept secret, the laws that authorize such techniques, and the United States Government's official interpretation of these laws, should not be kept secret but should instead be transparent to the public, so that these laws can be the subject of informed public debate and consideration.

(b) REPORT.—Not later than 60 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Attorney General shall publish in the Federal Register a report—

(1) that details the legal basis for the intelligence collection activities described in the February 2, 2011, report to the congressional intelligence committees; and

(2) that does not describe specific intelligence collection programs or activities, but that fully describes the legal interpretations and analysis necessary to understand the United States Government's official interpretation of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978 (50 U.S.C. 1801 et seq.).

In short, Eric Holder and James Clapper came to SSCI on February 2 and told the committee about a way the government was broadly interpreting FISA and the powers expiring next Monday.

This Amendment would require Holder to admit to what the government was doing, in broad terms, without revealing what kind of surveillance was going on.

This probably pertains to the Section 215 authorities; we know they're using it to construct databases of people who buy hydrogen peroxide and acetone. But I would bet there's a more generalized collection program that results in more databases they can mine. A very good guess would be using geolocation data from cell phones to collect information on the whereabouts of Americans.

Don't you think the time to press for such admissions is before this shit gets re-upped for another four years?

Update: Apparently this isn't even among the amendments Reid is pulling parliamentary maneuvers to avoid even discussing. So I guess

this is just an effort to wave a flag saying,
"PATRIOT isn't what it says it is?"