

KEITH ALEXANDER DECLARES FAILURE IN WAR ON TERROR, AS HE EARLIER DECLARED FAILURE IN CYBERDEFENSE

The New Yorker has a weird interview with Keith Alexander. The weirdness stems from Alexander's wandering answers, which may, in turn, stem from the fact that the interview was not done by an NSA beat reporter. Such interviews seem to flummox NSA insiders.

But beyond all the rambling about Jeopardy and "free vowels" and disingenuous claims (and silences) about past terrorist events, ultimately Keith Alexander wants us to know that we are at greater risk as he steps down after more than 8 years of protecting us.

His logic for that is not that terrorists struck the Boston Marathon last year, in spite of NSA apparently collecting on them but not reviewing the collection – he doesn't even mention that.

Rather, it's that the number of terrorist attacks are going up globally. The US has thus far avoided such attacks (ignoring hate crimes and the Marathon attack), which he points to as proof our spying is working. But he also points to it as proof that we're due.

There are people on one side saying that these N.S.A. programs could have stopped these plots. And then there are people who dispute that.

We know we didn't stop 9/11. People were trying, but they didn't have the tools. This tool, we believed, would help them. Let's look at what's happening right now. You ought to get this from

the START Program at the University of Maryland. They have the statistics on terrorist attacks. 2012 and 2013. The number of terrorist attacks in 2012—do you know how many there were globally?

How many?

Six thousand seven hundred and seventy-one. Over ten thousand people killed. In 2013, it would grow to over ten thousand terrorist attacks and over twenty thousand people killed. Now, how did we do in the United States and Europe? How do you feel here? Safe, right? I feel pretty safe.

[snip]

So think about how secure our nation has been since 9/11. We take great pride in it. It's not because of me. It's because of those people who are working, not just at N.S.A. but in the rest of the intelligence community, the military, and law enforcement, all to keep this country safe. But they have to have tools. With the number of attacks that are coming, the probability, it's growing—

I'm sorry, could you say that once more?

The probability of an attack getting through to the United States, just based on the sheer numbers, from 2012 to 2013, that I gave you—look at the statistics. If you go from just eleven thousand to twenty thousand, what does that tell you? That's more. That's fair, right?

I don't know. I think it depends what the twenty thousand—

—deaths. People killed. From terrorist attacks. These aren't my stats. The University of Maryland does it for the State Department.

I'll look at them. I will. So you're

saying that the probability of an attack is growing.

The probability is growing. What I saw at N.S.A. is that there is a lot more coming our way. Just as someone is revealing all the tools and the capabilities we have. What that tells me is we're at greater risk. I can't measure it. You can't say, Well, is that enough to get through? I don't know. It means that the intel community, the military community, and law enforcement are going to work harder.

Since Alexander invited us, let's see what the START data say, shall we? Here's what they tell us:

According to the annex, the 10 countries that experienced the most terrorist attacks in 2013 are the same as those that experience the most terrorist attacks in 2012.

Although terrorist attacks occurred in 93 different countries, they were heavily concentrated geographically. More than half of all attacks (57%), fatalities (66%), and injuries (73%) occurred in Iraq, Pakistan and Afghanistan. By wide margin, the highest number of fatalities (6,378), attacks (2,495) and injuries (14,956) took place in Iraq. The average lethality of attacks in Iraq was 40 percent higher than the global average and 33 percent higher than the 2012 average in Iraq.

The US hasn't been attacked. But attacks are mushrooming in Iraq, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. These not only happen to be places where we've been fighting the war on terror the longest and most directly, places where Alexander has been at the forefront of the fight, even before he took over at NSA. But they also happen to be

those places overseas that the NSA uses to legitimize their global reach.

Yet 13 or 11 years of concentrated spying – of collect it all – in those places has not eliminated terrorism. On the contrary, terrorism is now getting worse.

And now they serve as both the proof that spying is working and that spying is more necessary than ever.

Rather than evidence that the War on Terror is failing.

We shouldn't be surprised that we're losing a war fighting which Alexander was one of the longest tenured generals (though I don't think he bears primary responsibility for the policy decisions that have led to this state). After all, last year, Alexander said that also under his watch, we had been plundered like a colony via cyberattacks. He seems to think he lost both the war on terror and on cyberattacks.

Which, if you're invested in Wall Street, ought to alarm you. Because that's where Keith Alexander is headed to wage war next.