

Congress, intelligence officials join in attacking NSA whistleblower Snowden

Eric London
19 June 2013

Government and intelligence officials appeared before Congress yesterday as part of the cover-up of the Obama administration's massive international surveillance programs. The meeting was convened as a joint effort to attack whistleblower Edward Snowden and downplay the assault on democratic rights that he has made public.

The title of House Intelligence Committee hearing—"How Disclosed National Security Agency Programs Protect Americans, and Why Disclosure Aids Our Adversaries"—made clear its anti-democratic purpose and content.

The committee meeting came one day after Snowden issued a defiant response to the government threats, saying in an Q&A on the *Guardian* website that more revelations are in store, and that the "[t]ruth is coming and it cannot be stopped."

Republican House Intelligence Committee Chairman Mike Rodgers responded by saying in his opening remarks: "It is at times like these when our enemies within become almost as damaging as the enemies outside."

The testimonies provided by NSA head General Keith Alexander, FBI Deputy Director Sean Joyce, NSA Deputy Director Chris Inglis, General Counsel to the Office of the Director of National Intelligence Robert Litt, and Deputy Attorney General James Cole followed a similar script, consisting of unsubstantiated tales of thwarted terrorist attacks mixed with threats of future attacks.

Alexander claimed that the international spying campaign has helped "prevent potential terrorist events over fifty times since 9/11."

Barack Obama recited the same talking points in a recent interview with PBS's Charlie Rose. "The one thing people should understand about all these

programs is they have disrupted plots," the president said in an interview that aired Monday night.

Joyce repeated the claim that the PRISM program of Internet communications monitoring had thwarted an attempt to bomb the New York City subway. He also claimed that it fingered someone who had communicated with a "known extremist" in Yemen and was involved in "nascent plotting" to bomb the New York Stock Exchange.

All the supposed plots disrupted were described in the vaguest terms possible. In fact, the one factor that is common to many of the terror plots over the past decade—going back to the September 11 attack and extending through the Boston Marathon bombings—has been the involvement of individuals with connections to US intelligence.

The "war on terror" rationalizations are aimed at covering up the real purpose of the spying programs revealed by Snowden: the accumulation of massive stores of data on the population of the United States and the world.

Asked directly whether it was possible for NSA analysts to "flip a switch" to listen to phone calls or read emails of Americans, Alexander replied, "No."

The question about "flipping a switch" was deliberately ambiguous, but the answer given by Alexander is meant to suggest that the NSA cannot access the content of the communications of Americans—a claim that has been contradicted by Snowden and other NSA whistleblowers.

During the proceedings, Alexander and his cross-agency team of attorneys were showered with so much praise by members of Congress that it was almost unclear who was testifying before whom.

"General Alexander," said Republican Mike Rodgers in his opening remarks, "please convey our thanks to

your team for continuing every day despite much misinformation about the quality of their work. ... Thank you for continuing to serve to protect the United States,” Rodgers cooed. “Thank you on behalf of America for your service to your country.”

Rodger’s Democratic Party counterpart, Dutch Ruupersberger, was equally prostrated. “General Alexander...your leadership at the NSA has been outstanding,” he said.

“We are here today because of the brazen disclosure of critical classified information that keeps our country safe,” Ruppensberger went on. “This widespread leak by a 29 year-old American systems administrator put our country and our allies in danger by giving the terrorists a really good look at the playbook that we use to protect our country.

“The most important thing we can do here today,” Ruppensberger declared, “is let the public know the true facts ... so the public can understand that this program is legal, why we’re doing this program, and how it protects us.”

Alexander and company are given center stage not to “let the public know the true facts,” but rather to peddle a series of lies in an attempt to quell widespread opposition to the international programs of government surveillance.

The hostility of the ruling class to democratic rights was perhaps voiced most poignantly by Democrat Jan Schakowsky, who asked Alexander: “Do you feel that this open hearing today jeopardizes in any way our national security?”

Though Congress is unanimous about the need to spy on the American people, its members disagree as to whether or not the surveillance programs should be discussed in public.

With the state and media scurrying to cover-up the revelations made public by Edward Snowden, Congress is showing once again that it is ready and able to rubber stamp the unconstitutional actions of the executive.



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