

Handout
NSA Surveillance: Secret Truths and Historic Choices¹

Introduction: The NSA already operates a huge global surveillance system that does not obey the laws, or respect rights to privacy, of Europeans or other foreigners. President Bush has simply decided to treat Americans like everyone else.

I. Overview: Historic Choices, Two Larger Dimensions

- A. The International Danger: A Tipping Point in Global Popular Culture
 - Elements of a global police state system: spying, kidnaping, torture, death squads. Darth Vader threatens the world; shifts in popular culture abroad.
- B. The Domestic Danger: *The Lord of the Flies* and American Politics

II. Background: The NSA System

- A. Global (Huge) Capability
- B. Digital-age Dissolution of Legal Distinctions; Pool's Technologies of Freedom

III. Six Problems

- A. A Non-Learning Hegemon
 - *Hubris*
 - Induces fear and alienation; rebalancing of the balance of power
 - Self-destructive
- B. Almost Irresistible Technology - That Will Become More Attractive
- C. From Evidence-Based to Psychodynamically-Driven Policy
- D. Over-Reliance on a Limited-Benefit Technology
- E. Nightmare Scenarios: Damaging the spirit/psychology of freedom in the world?
- F. Blowbacks

IV. Four Strategic Solutions

- A. Rebalance foreign policy priorities
- B. Continue R&D and require technologies to show success in the war on drugs
- C. Strong pre-emptive countermeasures.
- D. Redirect surveillance and shift to deterrence

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Selected Quotations

“When President Bush last week signed the bill outlawing the torture of detainees, he quietly reserved the right to bypass the law under his powers as commander in chief. . . . After approving the bill last Friday, Bush issued a "signing statement" -- an official document in which a president lays out his interpretation of a new law -- declaring that he will view the interrogation limits in the context of his broader powers to protect national security. This means Bush believes he can waive the restrictions, the White House and legal specialists said.”

- Boston Globe, 1/24/2006

“The military is placing small teams of Special Operations troops in a growing number of American embassies to gather intelligence on terrorists in unstable parts of the world and to prepare for potential missions to disrupt, capture, or kill them.”

- The New York Times, 3/8/2006

“With a budget of \$10m, *Valley of the Wolves Iraq* is the most expensive film ever made in Turkey - and it is pulling record crowds. At one of Istanbul’s biggest multiplex cinemas the blockbuster is showing in five separate screens and nearly all of the seats are sold out. It’s the same story across the country. . . The action pits good Turks against very bad Americans. . . In one scene, trigger-happy US troops massacre civilians at a wedding party. In another they firebomb a mosque during evening prayer. There are multiple summary executions. And for the first time, the real-life abuses of American soldiers at Abu Ghraib prison are played out on the big screen. . . .

- BBC News, 2/20/2006

“The American Bar Association told President George W. Bush on Monday to either stop domestic eavesdropping without a warrant or get the law changed to make it legal.”

- Reuters, 2/18/2006

[Learning lessons from the war on drugs for domestic security and the war on terror]:
“[J]ust a few weeks ago . . . the White House drug-policy office reported that ‘Cocaine is widely available throughout most of the nation.’ The office offered similar assessments for heroin and marijuana.”

- The New York Times (3/2/2006)

Global Communications Traffic Map 2005

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