



## House Intelligence Committee Rubber Stamps Obama's Spy-on-Everyone Program

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The Obama administration's imperial "screw you" policy was in abundant display at the hearing of the House Intelligence Committee, Tuesday afternoon, October 29th, on the NSA's mass spying program.

The witnesses, led by Director of National Intelligence James Clapper and National Security Agency director Gen. Keith Alexander, stridently defended the programs, telling the committee that they are necessary to protect the United States from terrorist attacks and that scaling them back would leave gaps that would make the country more vulnerable.

Committee chairman Mike Rogers (R-Mich.) went a step further, attacking the media coverage of the Snowden disclosures and implying that soon, the government will have to act against the news media. Rogers also designed a defense of the NSA against the revelations that the agency has been spying directly on the leaders of countries friendly to, or even allied with, the United States. His defense amounted to "everybody does it. Our allies even do it to us!" Naturally, Clapper fully agreed.

The witnesses, who also included Deputy Attorney General James Cole and Deputy NSA Director Chris Inglis, were particularly given the opportunity to target the [Sensenbrenner/Leahy legislation introduced today](#), [1] which would essentially end the NSA's dragnet data-collection program. Alexander told the committee that without that program "there's a risk, and we know the risk because that's where we were on 9/11."

Clapper added that a restriction such as that would have the same effect as the sequester. Later in the hearing, Cole and Alexander both defended the "reasonable suspicion" standard as opposed to the probable-cause standard, which is a higher standard of evidence. Cole claimed that if the probable cause standard were applied to intelligence collection activities under section 215 of the Patriot Act, then the information necessary to establish probable cause would likely not be developed. "By raising the standard, we'd neuter 215," Clapper added.

Only two members of the committee expressed any skepticism about the activities of the NSA, Rep. Janice Schakowsky (D-Ill.) and Adam Schiff (D-Calif.). Schakowsky took exception to Alexander's strenuous defense of the NSA and its employees because of the unstated implication that anyone who disagreed with the spying policy might not be

patriotic. "I heard from you a robust defense of the status quo," she said, after noting the diplomatic blowback from the recent revelations. "There's a lot of people who are concerned about this," she added, "and who feel this must be changed."

Schiff commented that tapping the phone of the leader of an allied country is a significant intelligence activity that must be reported to the committee because of the blowback potential. Clapper replied that he believes that "in the totality" of what the intelligence community submits to the committee, such information is, in fact, supplied, though it may not include all of the details. Rogers intervened, however, before Schiff could pursue the matter further, to, in effect, accuse him of not spending enough time reviewing the materials supplied to the committee, and said that Schiff was being disingenuous by suggesting that the committee doesn't have a full understanding of the activities of the intelligence community. "Any implication that this committee is not fully informed is not correct," he said, to which Schiff replied "It is disingenuous to suggest that this committee has information it doesn't have." Schiff came back, later, to say, "I'd be surprised if anyone besides the chairman knew about [the tapping of German Chancellor Angela Merkel's cell phone]. We need more information when there's a potential for blowback like this."



**Links:**

[1] <http://larouhepac.com/node/28711>

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