

God's Ministers Are Listening: God Bless the Vice President, Secretary of Defense, and NSTAC

The "Holy Mission" of the National Security Telecommunications Advisory Committee (NSTAC)

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Region: [USA](#)

Global Research, May 19, 2006

19 May 2006

[American] people are more inclined to understand...that government carries the sword as the minister of God to execute wrath upon the evildoer. (Justice Antonin Scalia, Supreme Court of the United States)

Ever heard of the National Security Telecommunications Advisory Committee (NSTAC)? Well, if you haven't, you'd be smart to research the innards of the group by visiting www.ncs.gov/nstac/nstac.html. According to its charter, "NSTAC offers advice to the President on policy issues affecting not only the Government's ability to leverage the information infrastructure to better support NS/EP operations but also the Government's ability to protect the information infrastructure itself from threats and vulnerabilities that might ultimately jeopardize the country's national and economic security."

Given its mission and its powerful members—defense contractors, communications providers, software companies, government agencies—it is safe to assume that the NSTAC is one of the places where feasibility studies took place to determine whether the national security and corporate apparatus was up to the task of sweeping up the thoughts and actions of the American public and foreign interests traversing the digital domain. NSTAC likely worked closely with Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's Policy Organization, www.defenselink.mil/policy, and Vice President Dick Cheney's Office.

Such an effort would have had to include discussions about computer hardware and software that could be quick and intelligent enough to build patterns detailing not only generalized call and email tendencies among individuals and groups, but also the construction of dozens of relational databases designed to capture voice and text containing, say, anti-American government or conspiratorial phrases, foreign languages, and an assortment of habits common to the American public. That's a task made a lot easier due to America's real past time: information collection.

Show Me the Data!

One of the distinguishing traits of Americans is their obsession with collecting data and analyzing it for trends and, ultimately, to predict outcomes and gain an edge on competition. Think of the insurance industry, the stock market, baseball, football, hockey, basketball and the reams of statistics and percentages that businesses, consumers and

sports fans obsess over (the latter for their fantasy leagues) and rely on for life's decisions. Now imagine a subset of the American populace that being the national security and corporate apparatus with unlimited financial resources to design and build the algorithms, capture techniques and computing power to grab, store and target particular keywords in all the human conversation passing through the electromagnetic spectrum, whether it's voice or text. How hard can it be? Just think of Microsoft's Excel (Microsoft is a member of the NTSAC) and the powerful data analysis tool it is for individuals and organizations. What type of datamining and analysis tools must a trillion or so dollars buy?

But wait! There's more to be concerned about. Consider the mega-conference on Lawful Intercept being held by a group called Telestrategies at www.telestrategies.com. Visit the organization in McLean, Virginia and click on the ISS World image. Conference sessions include the State of Global Lawful Interception, Regulation and Legislation, Telecom Service Providers Lawful Interception Compliance, Network Surveillance and LI Solutions, Investigative Analysis Technology Developments and Tools, Lawful Interception Standards, Law Enforcement Agency (LEA) Training Sessions, and Product Specific LEA and Government Training. Make sure to review the "track agenda" sections for a list of who's who of domestic and international participants involved in the snooping world.

So what's the point? Does it really matter if your entire life is recorded and stored by your government and its contractors? Do you even care? It's worth thinking about.

God is Government, Government is God

Let's return to Justice Scalia's comment about the American public and its habit of believing that the US government is operating as a Minister of God and wielding its sword to execute wrath upon the evildoer. Americans have another distinguishing trait and that is their very childlike and naive Judeo-Christian beliefs. Followers are instructed to live daily on leaps-of-faith and millions bow down in fear before some phantom being, or those speaking for it, who resides somewhere in the coldness of space or at the center of the earth. Have faith! is the refrain. Trust us, the messengers and ministers; we've talked to the cloud. How easy it is to convince such a silly people of anything (this holds for all the major religions).

Because American's cling to these beliefs like so many insecure children afraid to explore the world on their own, they are easily frightened and vulnerable to the propaganda and lies dispensed from a US government marketed by leaders of all stripes as One Nation Under God. It's an authoritarian's or fascist's dream come true. God's ministers work in the US government on behalf of God. So, the US government represents God. Wow! The US government is God. God Bless America!

Has anyone thought about who the messengers and ministers of God's Blessed America are? Is it the many corporations and agencies of the NSTAC? Is it the Office of the Vice President? Maybe it's the Secretary of Defense, his Policy Organization, and the dozens of defense contractors that actually execute US policy. Perhaps it's the US Congress and its legions of lobbyists.

One thing for sure. It is comforting to know for a fact that God *really is* listening.

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