

The New Dominatrixes of Empire: Hey, Hey NSA: How Many Leaders Have You Spied On Today?

Data mining transforms the Spy business

By [Danny Schechter](#)

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As Data mining transforms the Spy business, Everything is fair game according to the NSA.

Their problem, says Danny Schechter, is that most of the world does not agree.

First we had Spymaster James Clapper dismissing concerns about NSA spying abuses denounced worldwide with a reference to the movie Casablanca. (His critics most recently were seconded by Secretary of State John Kerry who fears a tad of overkill, at least, now that some of this surveillance has been exposed.)

To Clapper's cinema-addicted mind, the critics are naive in the same way that French colonial police were when gambling was "discovered" in the famous Rick's Café.

He told a congressional committee probing his agency's overreach: "Some of this reminds me a lot of the classic movie 'Casablanca': 'My God, there's gambling going on here!'"

[Explained the CNET website](#) to those who missed the reference to one of America's greatest and most watched movies, "As you may recall, the scene has the French Capt. Renault (Claude Rains) closing down the cafe run by American Rick Blaine (Humphrey Bogart) on the pretext that it's a front for a casino.

"I'm shocked — shocked — to find that gambling is going on in here!" Renault says, at which point, of course, he's approached by a croupier who hands him a wad of cash.

"Your winnings, sir."

"Oh, thank you very much."

And that's the scene that was invoked to dismiss critics who questioned Washington's clandestine spying on foreign leaders, be they friends or enemies. The NSA's head honcho even said that the practice was "not significant enough" to tell Congress about.

The practice was defended simply as a staple in what's known as intelligence "tradecraft."

In These circles, apparently, it is no longer enough to be a know it all. Today, you are only prized if you can claim to know everything—except perhaps how to build a health care website that works

Morality or special relationships don't enter into the picture.

Clapper and company seem familiar fixtures, calling to mind- the character of General "Buck" Turgidson in another movie, "Dr Strangelove," the saga of a mad and paranoid U.S. General who starts World War 3 by bombing Russia.

Wouldn't you know it that his successors literally live and work in an office designed as movie set, so attuned are they to Hollywood symbolism.

[Clapper's boss, General Keith Alexander operates](#) from man NSA command module, built as a replica of the bridge of the fictional Starship Enterprise. No joke: That is the centerpiece of his war room. (They must be nothing, if not "cool" in the StarTrek community.) Alexander even sits in a "Captain's Chair" fashioned after the one on the TV series and movies that followed

The model they chose to appropriate is "Next-Gen NCC-1701-D." That's where they play at masterminding global espionage in the name of Washington's vision of U.S. global command and control.

They also have a fascination, make that an obsession, with technology as well, and speak of the process of mopping up data "hoovering," a reference to vacuum cleaners of days gone by.

Oh, how fun. They try to get it all because, well, simply, they think they can.

Reports the Washington Post:

"Rather than look for a single needle in the haystack, his approach was, 'Let's collect the whole haystack,' said one former senior US intelligence official who tracked the plan's implementation. 'Collect it all, tag it, store it. . . . And whatever it is you want, you go searching for it. . . .'"

This is how the concept of Total Information Awareness (TIA) has morphed into Total Information Dominance.(TID.) Move to the side you S&M freaks, your calling has a new brand of Dominatrixes.

This agency and its clones at local and state levels have set out to suck up as much "data" as they could with no apparent limits. Their bible is an Army intelligence memo, EO 12333:

"EO 12333 provides that "timely and accurate information about the activities, capabilities, plans, and intentions of foreign powers, organizations, and persons, and their agents, is essential to the national security of the United States." reports the Post "All reasonable and lawful means must be used to ensure that the United States will receive the best intelligence possible."

And so it is all rationalized as "technical means" with the law interpreted to justify virtually anything. Since few in the public are savvy enough to know how it all works, most are in awe as they continue to try to master the latest generations of smartphones or iPads.

These documents are riddled with carefully contrived distinctions like "merely receiving information does not constitute "collection" under AR 381-10; collection entails receiving 'for use.'"

The Agency's decide what they can and can't get away with in an environment where Congressional oversight has deteriorated into cheerleading instead of an effective check or balance. Members of Congress who are privy to the secrets are briefed in special lead-lined rooms, and flattered into feeling self important and part of the "mission."

Says THE memo: "Remember, Army intelligence may always receive information, if only to determine its intelligence value and whether it can be collected, retained, or disseminated in accordance with governing policy."

This is spy-speak of the highest density, and found in documents with endless subordinate clauses.

Any questions? Try ringing up Intelligence Watch at (703) 697-5484/5485, the inside number listed in the memo.

Writing in Foreign Policy, Shane Harris labels Alexander the "Cowboy of the NSA," noting that he has the reputation of being able to "charm the paint off a wall."

"Today," he writes, "the agency is routinely scooping up and storing Americans' phone records. It is screening their emails and text messages, even though the spy agency can't always tell the difference between an innocent American and a foreign terrorist. The NSA uses corporate proxies to monitor up to 75 percent of Internet traffic inside the United States. And it has spent billions of dollars on a secret campaign to foil encryption technologies that individuals, corporations, and governments around the world had long thought protected the privacy of their communications from U.S. intelligence agencies."

Why all this official attention to so much detail? Is the danger that great and are there methods that accurate? Other experts question the underlying arrogance here and challenge the assumption that it leads to smarter policy outcomes.

Many intelligence vets say it is misguided and compromised by a focus on the trustworthiness of individuals while ignoring key political trends and what drives all the international anger at the U.S.

On my radio show this week, I spoke with Coleen Rowley, an FBI Veteran who became a post 911 whistle blower and who was focused on the culture of secrecy in a country where nearly five million people now have high security clearances.

What was once considered the 'cult of intelligence,' has grown exponentially on an industrial scale.

Rowley's take is that more secret everything is, the less critical thinking there is—the very antithesis of what makes for useful and usable intelligence. The "Intelligence community" is now in the data processing business, not independent analysis, because if your conclusion is in conflict with the the conventional wisdom, you are danger of becoming suspect, even considered a potential Snowden.

In fact, former agent Rowley was one of the former intelligence officers who actually met Snowden in Russia. She was not only convinced of his sincerity but told me that his motive was not to bring down his "industry" but to reform it by using selective exposure.

The super spyboys have had a good run, but now the real world is bursting their bubble

with pushback and ridicule. Something's gotta give and it will.

*News Dissector Danny Schechter blogs at [News Dissector.net](http://NewsDissector.net) and edits Mediachannel.org.
His latest book is *Madiba A-Z: The Many Faces of Nelson Mandela* (Seven Story Press)
Comments to dissector@mediachannel.org*

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