

Obama administration officials, guilty of perjury, defend spy program

By Thomas Gaist
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The Obama administration has responded to the revelations of massive and unconstitutional spying operations, exposed in leaks by former intelligence employee Edward Snowden, with a campaign of lies, threats and intimidation.

Among other crimes, the leaks have provided clear evidence of perjury on the part of administration officials, a criminal offense.

Asked at a Senate hearing in March, “Does the NSA collect any type of data at all on millions or hundreds of millions of Americans?” Director of National Intelligence James Clapper responded with the statement: “No, sir.” He said that any information collected on Americans was not done “wittingly.”

This was a brazen lie. Among the programs revealed by Snowden is one that allows the National Security Agency, which operates under Clapper’s direction, to accumulate the phone records of most Americans. When questioned about his previous statements on Sunday, Clapper told NBC, “I thought, though in retrospect, I was asked a — ‘When are you going to start — stop beating your wife’ kind of question, which is meaning not answerable necessarily by a simple yes or no. So I responded in what I thought was the most truthful, or least untruthful, manner by saying ‘no.’ ”

The Orwellian phrase, “least untruthful,” is an expression of the contempt with which Clapper—and the political establishment as a whole—views basic democratic rights. In other words, he lied, but with as much finesse as possible.

The Obama administration rushed to defend Clapper. “The president has full faith in director Clapper and his leadership of the intelligence community,” National Security Council spokeswoman Caitlin Hayden told the British newspaper, the *Guardian*.

Obama “certainly believes that Clapper has been

straight and direct in the answers that he’s given” claimed Press Secretary Jay Carney on Tuesday.

Leading congressional Democrats have similarly offered unswerving defense of Clapper. Senate Intelligence Committee Chairwoman Dianne Feinstein told ABC, “There is no more direct or honest person than Jim Clapper.”

On Wednesday, the head of the National Security Administration, General Keith Alexander, testified before Senate appropriations committee, defending the spying programs.

Two weeks ago, at a “cyber security summit” held by Reuters, Alexander declared, “The great irony is we’re the only ones not spying on the American people.” Previously, in a hearing held in March 2012, Alexander categorically denied that the NSA intercepts Americans’ electronic and telephone based communications.

Alexander was treated with kid gloves during his testimony. Compliments abounded, as senators made no serious effort to question Alexander about his previous false claims.

Responding to one direct question about Snowden’s claim that he could wiretap any phone call in the US, General Alexander said: “False, I know of no way to do it.”

Despite this claim, Alexander acknowledged that telephone record collection under Section 215 of the Patriot Act has been conjoined with the Internet spying program PRISM, justified under Section 702 of the FISA Amendments Act, creating a bulk collection system that is basically limitless in scope.

“The reality is, they work together,” Alexander said. Once the state has “reasonable, articulable suspicions” of involvement in terrorism, “we can go backwards in time and see who he was talking to,” he affirmed.

Alexander offered the unsubstantiated assertion that the surveillance program has stopped “dozens” of “potential” attacks, yet when asked to detail these incidents specifically, Alexander said that such information must be reserved for secret hearings later in the week. In fact, almost every terrorist attack supposedly thwarted by the US government—as well as the Boston Marathon bombing—involved individuals who were working with intelligence agencies.

A secret hearing of the Senate Intelligence Committee, chaired by Feinstein, is scheduled for today.

The *Guardian* newspaper noted that a fact sheet released by Clapper claimed that the secret Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court only allows the acquisition of content of communications when “there is a reasonable suspicion, based on specific facts, that the particular basis for the query is associated with a foreign terrorist organization.”

The *Guardian* commented, “But the factsheet is ambiguous about whether the court must approve each specific database search of Americans' phone records, or merely has created guidelines that the NSA unilaterally executes. Representatives of Clapper and the NSA did not respond to the Guardian's request for clarification.”

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