

**THE BLOG**

In Which I Reveal Our Secret Plans to the Terrorists

By Marty Kaplan

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The goofiest argument against discussing the NSA data-mining and warrantless wiretaps is that it telegraphs our counter-terrorist strategy to the bad guys. This is the tack Bush took once again, when he unsubtly chastised USA Today and its government sources. It's what Republican Senator John Kyl meant when he called the public debate about the NSA "nuts": "We are in a war and we've got to collect intelligence on the enemy, and you can't tell the enemy in advance how you are going to do it. And discussing all of this in public leads to that."

The Republican idea seems to be that al Qaeda is so stupid that they need a newspaper headline to hit them on the head to alert them to the possibility that we might, you know, be listening in on them.

Well, just in case the terrorists have never seen a spy movie or read a spy novel or watched "24" or even attended their own psy-ops training camps, let's get this out of the way once and for all:

Hey! Al Qaeda! We're spying on you. You use a landline, we're tapping it. You use a cellphone, we're listening in. You send email, we're intercepting it. You use a credit card or an ATM, we know about it. You rent a car or a hotel room, we're onto you. You talk to one another in a park, we're eavesdropping. You use a carrier pigeon or two tincans and a string, we're on the case. You think you can trust someone? They're wearing a wire, and they work for us. You cross our borders, we're on your tail. There's no escaping us, dudes — we've got you covered.

Ok, now that I've revealed our double super-duper secret strategy for collecting intelligence, can we please get back to the question of how to ensure that the way we do it doesn't kick the crap out of our own civil liberties as a side effect?

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