

**THE BLOG**

Read Rockefeller's Letter

By Marty Kaplan

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Bush and Cheney are saying that the briefings that Hill leaders got on his domestic spying operation demonstrate how respectful they are of oversight, checks and balances, advise & consent — you know, the kind of freedom stuff we're fighting for in Iraq.

But take a look at this letter, just released by Senator Jay Rockefeller, the ranking Democrat on the Intelligence Committee (via Josh Marshall).

He wrote it to Cheney in 2003, after he learned about the wiretapping-without-FISA-court-approval maneuver. It's handwritten — because no one in the meeting could tell anyone else about it, not even a typist. Rockefeller told Cheney he could *not* endorse the program. He said he was keeping a sealed copy of the letter — for a moment just like this.

Doubtless Republican Pat Roberts, the Kansas toady who chairs the Senate Intelligence Committee, got with the Bush program; after all, he's the one who's stopped the investigation of Administration misuse of pre-war intelligence for nearly two years, until Harry Reid forced the Senate into private session.

Bush says we should trust him, because he swore an oath of office. If his briefings of Congress on domestic spying are an example of what he thinks it means to submit to oversight, maybe this will stiffen the spine of some Democrats enough for them now to tell the White House what advise and consent *really* means — and the matter of Sam Alito provides an awfully appropriate opportunity to do that.

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