

Instead of Reining In Mass Surveillance, Obama Tries to Put Lipstick On a Pig

By [Washington's Blog](#)

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Member of Oversight Committee Calls It “Shameful”

In August, we [noted](#) that Obama’s promises to rein in NSA spying weren’t credible:

President Obama just announced that he’s making “reforms” to the NSA spying program.

Should we believe him?

Obama’s claim this week that the government doesn’t spy on Americans is [totally false](#). Not only is the NSA spying on Americans, but it’s [sharing that information with a variety of other agencies](#) ... like the IRS and local law enforcement.

Obama made other easily-disprovable claims today ...

Senator Ron Wyden – a member of the Intelligence Committee – [points out](#):

Notably absent from President Obama’s speech was any mention of closing the backdoor searches loophole that potentially allows for the warrantless searches of Americans’ phone calls and emails under section 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act.

The New York Times Editorial Board [writes](#):

President Obama, who seems to think the American people simply need some reassurance that their privacy rights are intact, proposed a series of measures on Friday that only tinker around the edges of the nation’s abusive surveillance programs.

The collection of records will continue as it has for years, gathering far more information than is necessary to fight terrorism.

Fundamentally, Mr. Obama does not seem to understand that the nation needs to hear more than soothing words about the

government's spying enterprise. He suggested that if ordinary people trusted the government not to abuse their privacy, they wouldn't mind the vast collection of phone and e-mail data.

Bizarrely, he compared the need for transparency to showing his wife that he had done the dishes, rather than just telling her he had done so. Out-of-control surveillance is a bit more serious than kitchen chores. It is the existence of these programs that is the problem, not whether they are modestly transparent. As long as the N.S.A. believes it has the right to collect records of every phone call — and the administration released a white paper Friday that explained, unconvincingly, why it is perfectly legal — then none of the promises to stay within the law will mean a thing.

Indeed, [even Obama admitted](#) that he's not going to do anything to actually rein in spying:

To allay concerns, Obama endorsed modest oversight changes to a program he says already has plenty of it. None of them significantly changes the programs, and the president acknowledged they were intended to appease Americans, not to curtail the surveillance.

Once again — when bad government policy is revealed — the government just tries to [put lipstick on the pig](#).

Top NSA whistleblower William Binney — the 32-year high-level NSA cryptographer and former head of the NSA's global digital data gathering program — has explained that it is technically easy and cheap to rein in the spying program [so that it complies with the Constitution](#).

Binney told me that the only way to stop the mass surveillance on Americans is to fire the corrupt government officials who let it happen.

He's right.

As we explained [5 years ago](#), the only way to stop the ransacking of our prosperity and our constitutional rights is to fire the guys who [keep fleecing us again and again](#).

Ralph Waldo Emerson's words over 100 years ago apply rather well to the government officials who have repeatedly lied about spying:

“Who you are speaks so loudly I can't hear what you're saying.”

Indeed, Obama [appointed the fox to investigate the henhouse](#), appointing James Clapper to lead the NSA oversight effort. Clapper lied under oath to Congress, and the [9/11 Commission chair](#), [author of the Patriot Act](#), and [American public](#) all want Clapper *persecuted for perjury* regarding spying.

We [noted](#) in November:

[Only 11%](#) of Americans trust Obama to actually do anything to rein in spying

We were right to doubt Obama's sincerity.

Obama is simply going to put lipstick on a pig ... and [make no real changes](#).

As the Guardian [reports](#):

A participant in a White House-sponsored review of surveillance activities described as "shameful" an apparent decision to leave most of the National Security Agency's controversial bulk spying intact.

"The review group was searching for ways to make the most modest pivot necessary to continue business as usual," Meinrath said.

And the Washington Post [writes](#):

The Obama administration has decided to preserve a controversial arrangement under which a single military official is permitted to direct both the National Security Agency and the military's cyberwarfare command, U.S. officials said. The decision by President Obama comes amid signs that the White House is not inclined to impose significant new restraints on the NSA's activities and favors maintaining an agency program that collects data on virtually every phone call that Americans make Some officials, [including top U.S. intelligence officials](#), had argued that the NSA and Cyber Command should be placed under separate leadership to ensure greater accountability and avoid an undue concentration of power.

"The big picture is there's not going to be that much [additional] constraint" by the White House, said a second U.S. official, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss internal deliberations. "They're really not hurting [NSA] that much."

Of course, the other main defenders of the status quo - congressional intelligence chairs Feinstein and Rogers - are mounting their [own phony "reform" efforts](#).

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