

Shooting the messenger

The Bush-Cheney administration has itself to blame for the newspaper publication of the National Security Agency surveillance program last December and the SWIFT banking surveillance program recently.

The reason many of us support newspapers publishing accounts of these programs is because the president and the vice president have shown themselves to be untrustworthy and willing to use private information for political gain. They purposely muddled together Iraq and al-Qaeda when they weren't really connected (although now they certainly are). They leaked Valerie Plame's identity to get back at her husband for criticizing the administration. They spy on the Quaker peace group the American Friends Service Committee and hundreds of other such groups. They bully peaceful protest groups with FBI investigations. They refuse to properly inform the appropriate congressional oversight committees of their surveillance programs. The president issues "signing statements" declaring he will decide which parts of the law he will comply with and which he won't.

No wonder people are concerned about what the administration is up to.

The administration can attack the New York Times and the Wall Street Journal, but readers would not support publication of such stories if the government were trustworthy.

There is certainly an issue here about leaking of classified information. But there is also an issue about government abuse of power, and we should not move the focus away from that. If the president conducted himself in an honest manner he would not have to worry about attacking freedom of the press, which is what he is doing now.

I regret seeing all this happen, because we do need an aggressive program to combat terrorism, and some of it needs to be done in secret. If the president would stop shooting himself in the foot, he wouldn't have to worry about shooting the messenger.

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