

Recent headlines bring with them some of each. First off, here is a Brian Ross (ABC News) blog entry from yesterday:
Federal Source to ABC News: We Know Who You're Calling
May 15, 2006 10:33 AM
Brian Ross and Richard Esposito Report:
A senior federal law enforcement official tells ABC News the government is tracking the phone numbers we (Brian Ross and Richard Esposito) call in an effort to root out confidential sources.

Other sources have told us that phone calls and contacts by reporters for ABC News, along with the New York Times and the Washington Post, are being examined as part of a widespread CIA leak investigation.

You can find the full article here:
http://blogs.abcnews.com/theblotter/2006/05/federal_source_.html
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Karl Rove stumbled into a moment of truthiness yesterday, while defending the administration's handling of the immigration issue he said, "We're doing a heck of a job." Oops! We all know what that means (if you need a Bush-to-English translator, check out these references:

<http://news.google.com/news?hl=en&ned=us&ie=UTF-8&q=%22doing+a+heck+of+a+job%22&btnG=Search+News>)

I particularly like Dana Milbank's take on the comment, "First, he said the administration was doing `a heck of a lot better, uh, job of getting control of the border.' Then he uttered the forbidden phrase, and it sent him into a syntactical tailspin: `We're doing a heck of a job — lot better job at getting, at getting, uh, the — the problem of catch-and-release under control.'"

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/05/15/AR2006051501217.html>
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So in the realm of the bizarre, doesn't anyone else think it a little odd that it was USA Today who broke the NSA phone data story? In conversations over the past few days this story, and its provenance, has brought me to the conclusion that there is no actual NSA domestic spying happening at all.

Let's just look at the "facts" as we know them. The NSA, which had wiretap evidence of the 9-11 attacks on 9-10, but didn't bother to translate it until 9-12, is now supposedly handling vast amounts of new data? Get real. If they are really processing the phone records of all Americans, as the USA Today and later articles describe, then maybe we can all feel a little less safe, as it will obviously be distracting them from the translation of all of those intercepts they're gleaning from their FISA-less wiretaps.

No, I think that this is all an elaborate ruse, a fake out. After all, as many have said before, isn't al Qaeda a little too smart to be using domestic US telephone systems to communicate their plans? I think that all of these convenient "leaks" about domestic wiretaps and call record logs is merely an effort to scare all terrorists away from our easy to use telecommunications systems. If effective, this ruse would serve to severely disable the bad guys without requiring much work at all by the NSA - leaving them free to pursue more important jobs, like translating Tom Cruise missives.

That's my story and I'm sticking to it.
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The Boston Herald reports

(<http://news.bostonherald.com/localPolitics/view.bg?articleid=139204>)

that the public perceives Gov. Mitt Romney, potential 2008 presidential contender, as “a pretty face but an empty suit, giving him high marks for his chiseled good looks but low grades for honesty, conviction and uniqueness” in a new poll.

I guess this bodes well for him in Karl Rove logic. Rove yesterday explained to an unimpressed audience at the American Enterprise Institute that while Bush’s approval ratings are in the basement (Harris poll clocks him at 29%) his “likeability” rating is in the 70s. This is somewhat akin to the Clinton era reckoning that while people didn’t like Bill Clinton, they had to respect that he was doing a heck of a job (oops!).