Dear Tyler,

Thanks for your letter and your excellent article. Bill Binney is a good friend of mine, and you do him right. Here are a couple of answers to your questions:

- In my 2007 ABC interview I tried to explain that there were actually two waterboarding questions: was it effective and was it right. CIA counterterrorism leadership told us that it was effective and had disrupted attacks; this was a lie. KSM had gotten to the point where he would have confessed to kidnapping the Lindbergh baby. Nashiri actually lost his mind because of waterboarding. Besides, it was morally wrong. I think Alexander clings to the myth of effectiveness because the alternative simply makes us monsters.

- The CIA argued that my 2007 interview was espionage as described in the Espionage Act of 1917. Thank God the Justice Department disagreed. You are right that information relating to a crime may not be legally classified. I revealed illegality, and I think the Bush Administration concluded that it couldn’t win that fight.

- Journalist Matthew Cole emailed me in late 2007 saying
that he would "never reveal your identity to anyone at any time." That was a lie. He never had any intent to protect my identity. The shame of the situation is that we were on the same side vis-a-vis the ACLU. In the end, Cole was a coward who sought only to protect himself. I have nothing but contempt for him.

I have grave doubts as to the efficacy of extant whistleblower protections as they relate to national security. There really are no protections, and a whistleblower must weigh the truth against continuation of his life as he knows it. Meanwhile, at the senior levels, policymakers are free to leak for political reasons with no consequences.

Thanks again for writing.

John