Conflict of Interest:  
Quis Custodiet Ipsos Custodies?

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I recently received another interesting response to my original article about conflict of interest. I have altered some of the details to protect the authors, who must understandably remain anonymous for their own safety. My thanks to the authors.

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We are a security and auditing software technology provider in a third-world country. Just recently we finished an assessment of the internal information security and auditing of the Justice Department.

However, one area of interest is the several thousand video tapes, sound tapes and related documents of the previous government, mainly the video tapes of the ex-head of the Federal Investigation Agency, of his many meetings, during which he paid bribes to control, manipulate and rob the country.

Currently the anti-corruption judges, staff and prosecutors are reviewing these tapes and transcripts, and almost daily they are uncovering the identity of other corrupted people in all areas of government and the private sector. In a part of the world where corruption has been a way of life for centuries, . . . one can imagine the attempts made to gain access to these tapes . . . and have them "permanently misplaced" . . .

The Justice Department is evaluating technology to digitalize all the tapes and documents, mainly for security reasons: controlling access, backup, etc.

What we have asked them, is who in fact will be in charge of the system? Who will be responsible for managing all users and administrators, access rights and permissions, etc.? Based on what we know of international security and auditing standards, rules and policies, it certainly cannot be any of the people who will use this system or anyone in the IT department, ALL OF WHOM HAVE A POTENTIAL CONFLICT OF INTEREST. Currently IT security is an IT department responsibility.

Talk about financial audit integrity, where the CFO can write a check and erase the transaction from his General Ledge; imagine what potential security issues the Justice Department will have if they implement this system with their current IT security and auditing structure. We have [been working on deciding] these basic issues and [to] define them, and [to] pass laws if necessary . . . [on] . . . who will enforce what is decided, before they even begin to evaluate any specific software solutions and start the budgeting process.

I will update you as we learn if they have any common sense and reality in these basic premises and realities. The book "Secrets and Lies," by Bruce Schneier, has appropriate words for your point: "If you think technology can solve your security problems, then you don't understand the
problems and you don't understand the technology."

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A note on the title: "Who will guard the guards?" -- Juvenal, a Roman satirist of around 60-140 CE ("common era" -- a term used by non-Christians as equivalent to "AD" which means "anno domini" or "year of our Lord") who harassed the power structure of imperial Rome. [Five years of Latin have to be good for _something_]!

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