

Edward Snowden talks about U.S. spy programs in wide-ranging interview



Moscow, October 26 (RHC)-- NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden wants to come home, just not into the waiting arms of a fear-based system of “turnkey tyranny” that has mushroomed with the rise of smartphones, he told talk show host Joe Rogan.

Americans might believe the government cleaned up its act after Snowden revealed the NSA’s unconstitutional spying in 2013, but things have actually gotten much worse, the former agent told Rogan on Wednesday in a marathon three-hour interview. The mass adoption of smartphones has made the government’s job much easier, allowing for universal 24-hour surveillance.

“All this information that used to be ephemeral...now, these things are stored. It doesn’t matter whether you’re doing anything wrong,” Snowden said. “That’s how bulk collection – the government’s euphemism for mass surveillance – works. They simply collect it all in advance in the hope that it will one day become useful.”

Google Street View cars, wireless access points, and seemingly innocent apps are all tools of surveillance, he said, explaining that “there’s an industry that is built on keeping [bulk data collection and

surveillance] invisible.”

Smartphone users, Snowden said, need to demand the right to control what their devices actually do – if we could see what was going on at any given time, we’d be horrified. “If there was a button on your phone that said ‘Do what I want, but not spy on me,’ you would press that button, right?”

“Unfortunately Google and Apple... neither of them allow that button to exist. In fact, they actively interfere with it, because they say it’s a security risk,” Snowden continued, lamenting that the devices’ complexity has rendered them vulnerable to exploitation by government spies. The constant, desensitizing flood of stories about data manipulation “happens as a result of a single problem – an inequality of available information. They can see everything about you, they can see everything about what your device is doing, and they can do whatever they want with your device.” “You on the other hand... you paid for the device, but increasingly these corporations own it.”

That inequality is at the heart of the problem of government surveillance, Snowden believes. In the stifling climate of fear that descended following 9/11, “we had lost our seat at the table of government,” he said. “We were no longer partnered with the government, we had simply become subjects of the government.”

Snowden blames that fear for the rise of Trump, explaining, “When we become fearful, we become vulnerable to anyone who promises they will make things better – even if they have no ability to make things better, even if they will actively make things worse even if they will make things better for themselves and their buddies by taking from you.”

And Trump – along with every president that comes after him – has access to the same monstrous system of “turnkey tyranny” constructed in secrecy by then-Vice President Dick Cheney and his lawyer David Attington almost two decades ago. Presidents are given a good “fearing-up” – given an inflated idea of the threats facing them – and they invariably succumb to the demands of the intelligence agencies. Those who don’t are mercilessly tormented by them, as Trump is quickly learning. Either way, the intelligence agencies continue slurping up secrets with impunity.

Stellarwind, the surveillance program Snowden revealed to the world back in 2013, was crafted in such secrecy that just eight members of Congress knew about it. The two congressmen who objected were reduced to “sort of doing these weird Lassie barks to the press” – trying to tip journalists off to the existence of the program without leaking classified information – but no mainstream media outlet would take the bait.

Snowden would like to come home someday, but he doubts he’ll never get a fair trial. Threatened with prosecution under the Espionage Act – “a law the government exclusively uses against people who tell the truth” – he does not believe he’s safe, even in Russia, where he lives in exile. But safety is not exactly a priority – if it was, he’d still be getting paid to spy on Americans.

“If you’re trying to eliminate all risks from your life, what you’re actually doing is eliminating all possibility from your life. if you’re trying to collapse the universe of outcomes, you’ve actually lost the ability to act because you’re afraid, and that’s what got us into this mess.”

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