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Why Edward Snowden, NSA whistleblower, is

When assessing Edward Snowden, the man behind perhaps the biggest intelligence leak

more hero than traitor: Burman

in American history, conscience is the key.

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A supporter holds a sign at a small rally in support of Edward Snowden in Manhattan's Union Square on June 10, 2013.



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By: Tony Burman Special to the Star, Published on Sat Jun 15 2013

Daniel Ellsberg, take your leaked Pentagon Papers and step aside. There's a new gunslinger in town: Edward J. Snowden — former CIA employee, 29 years of age and now whistleblower on the run.

Whether Snowden ends up jailed in the U.S., dead in some dumpster overlooking Hong Kong's harbour, or — even worse — if he winds up as a regular contributor to CNN or Fox News, we will be hearing about him for years to come in any history of audacious American whistleblowers.

Snowden is the man behind what might be the biggest intelligence leak in American history. In a series of explosive disclosures to The Guardian newspaper, he has revealed that the U.S. National Security Agency is collecting more than 200 billion pieces of intelligence a month, gathering a vast

quantity of emails and web searches from the world's largest Internet companies and routinely misleading the people who are supposed to oversee its actions.

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than previously known. They also describe an expanding role for private corporations in what appears to be developing into a secret surveillance state. For its part, the U.S. government explains this as being crucial in its anti-terrorism efforts.

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A debate has begun to rage in U.S. and British political circles about whether, in revealing these secrets, Snowden is a hero, or a traitor. My sense is that he is far more the former than the latter. He didn't did do it for money, or to "aid and abet the enemy." As unlikely as this may be in today's poisoned political

environment, it appears he did it out of conscience — "My sole motive is to inform the public as to that which is done in their name, and that which is done against them." That motivation will make it more difficult for the Americans to pursue him aggressively as his case moves ahead.

Snowden was an employee of a U.S. government contractor in Hawaii that worked with the National Security Agency. He had free access to its mushrooming computer systems and said he became alarmed at the scale of surveillance of innocent people. Snowden said he thought Barack Obama would act to restrain the NSA, but when that didn't happen, he made the decision to leak: "I had been looking for leaders, but I realized that leadership is about being the first to act."

He fled to Hong Kong last month and told the South China Morning Post newspaper this week that he wants the people there to decide his fate. The U.S. has not yet filed an application for extradition and a court battle could be lengthy. Snowden said that he had faith in Hong Kong's legal system: "I am not here to hide from justice. I am here to reveal criminality."

The response from the American political establishment has been predictably ferocious. John Boehner, the House Speaker, called him a "traitor." Senator Dianne Feinstein, chair of the Senate Intelligence Committee, said it was "an act of treason." Most of the influential newspaper columnists were also critical, citing the continuing threats to the United States as a result of the Sept. 11 attacks in 2001.

But largely lost in the public clamour was what Snowden's disclosures revealed. They confirmed that the U.S. government routinely collects the phone logs of millions of Americans who have no ties to terrorism, without seeking any court warrants. They confirmed that the NSA has access to Internet companies such as Google, Facebook and Microsoft, enabling it to collect online data about millions of Americans for perpetuity. And they confirmed that American authorities, in their testimony to the U.S. Congress, have lied about their practices.

James Clapper, President Obama's director of national intelligence, said this week that the Snowden leaks were profoundly serious: "For me, it is literally — not figuratively, literally - gut-wrenching to see this happen." But only three months ago, when testifying at a Senate hearing, he was asked: "Does the NSA collect any type of data at all on millions or hundreds of millions of Americans?" Clapper replied: "No, sir."

Thanks to Edward J. Snowden, we now know that Clapper lied. And we know much more.

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ealistic if people didn't think that the government wasn't randomly listening to phone calls sing data they were being naive. This must have been happening on some scale for e. I'd hate to pick on one generation but I am going to. This 20 something generation n a time when their parents gave them everything and never said no. If they did try to ales they would challenge them and do want they want anyway. Rules they don't believe this person seems to have seen something he didn't like and said to hell with the in the contract I signed to work here I am going to tell the world what I know. If he had gence to evaluate the potential implications from what he was doing and the lives he putting at risk he may have acted differently. But I get the sense he is just a selfish ho really didn't do this to help his fellow citizens rather just to his get his way.

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u are an internet start-up company with some new software forgetaboutit!!! cases, the information gathered may be used not just to defend the nation but to help computers of its adversaries.

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911 was something? It was nothing. Two towers down, a few other buildings destroyed? n't kind yourself, those who hate America - for good reason, bad reason, or no reason - id one day may well, get hold of a nuclear device, or a clever snippet of DNA, and then, you'd be happy to settle for 911. Three thousand dead? A drop in the bucket. When the 't number in the thousands, but hundreds of thousands, or millions, 911 will seem like a collecting telephone metadata makes that nightmare more likely to remain the stuff of nere's my cell phone number . . .

1



IDiTy[^] 4 months ago

hose who would sacrifice freedom for security deserve neither..." Benjamin Franklin y don't make American Leaders like they used to do they Karl... Keep your Cell number , no one's gonna call ya....

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nklin needed to worry about muskets and cannon. Times change. If you base your ons on the mores of the past and the adages of the dead, you'll soon be both.

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eah.... Muskets and Cannons are now Cell Phones... heheheheh... Or I guess that's lear Cell Phones... Good Grief, Security is achieved by indulging the Democratic ethic undermining it...

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