



The Snowden Files: The Inside Story of the World's Most Wanted Man

Luke Harding

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IT BEGAN WITH A TANTALIZING, ANONYMOUS EMAIL: "I AM A SENIOR MEMBER OF THE INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY."

What followed was the most spectacular intelligence breach ever, brought about by one extraordinary man. Edward Snowden was a 29-year-old computer genius working for the National Security Agency when he shocked the world by exposing the near-universal mass surveillance programs of the United States government. His whistleblowing has shaken the leaders of nations worldwide, and generated a passionate public debate on the dangers of global monitoring and the threat to individual privacy.

In a tour de force of investigative journalism that reads like a spy novel, award-winning Guardian reporter Luke Harding tells Snowden's astonishing story — from the day he left his glamorous girlfriend in Honolulu carrying a hard drive full of secrets, to the weeks of his secret-spilling in Hong Kong, to his battle for asylum and his exile in Moscow. For the first time, Harding brings together the many sources and strands of the story —touching on everything from concerns about domestic spying to the complicity of the tech sector — while also placing us in the room with Edward Snowden himself. The result is a gripping insider narrative—and a necessary and timely account of what is at stake for all of us in the new digital age.

From the Trade Paperback edition.

The Snowden Files: The Inside Story of the World's Most Wanted Man Details

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N?ρα says

Η προσωπική ιστορία του αμερικανού πρώην στελέχους της κοινότητας των μυστικών υπηρεσιών, που αποκάλυψε το αδιανήκτο έργο των παρνόμων και ανάτιων παρακολούθησεων που κάνουν οι μυστικές υπηρεσίες των ΗΠΑ και του Ηνωμένου Βασιλείου σε εκατομμύρια, χωρίς καμία άδεια και αιτιολογία.

Την υπόθεση Σνόουντεν την έχω παρακολουθεί εκτενώς όταν ξέσπασε, λίγο πριν την τηλεόραση (πιο πολύ πριν περιέργεια για να δω τι μπαρόφες θα λήγανε τα ελληνικά κανάλια), αλλά κυρίως μου κολημύνη στο ντεντε καθημερινά και διβάζα είδσεις. Όταν θα έχω καταλαλήσει ο θύρβος θέλα να διαβώ και το βιβλίο που ευτυχώς μεταφώστηκε και στα ελληνικά.

Κπως διαφωτιστική σχετικά με την υπόθεση Σνόουντεν. Διαβίζοντας το συνειδητοποίησα πως διαστρεβλώνει τα γεγονότα η τηλεόραση. Βββαία δεν περιμένα τίποτε άλλο πριν το μύσο της παραπληροφώρησης.

Έχει πολύ ενδιαφέρον να διαβείς για την ζωή του, πως διαμορφώθηκε η σκψη του μέσα πριν τις εμπειρίες του, αλλά και τους λόγους που τον οδήγησαν σε αυτό τη πράξη.

Και τι μάθα πριν αυτό το βιβλίο ; πολλά και σημαντικά.

Αρχικά τη δύναμη και την επιρροή που μπορεί να έχει η τεχνολογία στην δημοκρατία της καθημερινότητας στην σύγχρονη κοινωνία (Ο έργουελ επιβεβαιώνεται και να σκεφτείς τι μπορεί τον λήγανε τρέλ)

Μάθα τι είναι η NSA και τι διαθέτει καταπληκτικές ικανότητες για τον πρωτόφαντο γκό δεδομένων επικοινωνιών που μπορεί να συλλέξει σε όλο τον κόσμο.

Με την βοήθεια της η κυβέρνηση των ΗΠΑ έχει βάλει κορίους στα προσωπικά κινητά τηλέφωνα της Άγκελα Μάρκελ, Ενρίκε Πίνια Νίτο (ο πρώτος του Μεξικό), Ντλμα Βίνα Ροσέφ (οικονομολόγος, πολιτικός, πρώτος της Βραζιλίας) και σε δεκάδες άλλους ηγέτες του κόσμου. Τουλάχιστον δεν κάνει διακρίσεις, παρακολουθεί του πάντες.

Μετά τις αποκαλύψεις που έκανε ο Σνόουντεν, ότι οι εταιρείες (Yahoo, Microsoft, Google, κλπ) προσφώθηκαν πριν την πρώτη στιγμή να συνεργαστούν με τις μυστικές υπηρεσίες Άγγλας και Αμερικας αλλά επειδή φοβώθηκαν το κρξίμο που θα έτρωγαν πριν τους πελάτες τους μλεις υπήρχε κάποια διαρροή, ζήτησαν πριν τις κυβερνήσεις να τους "υποχρύνουν" με νόμο να παραδδουν τα δεδομένα πριν τους σέρβερ τους ώστε να μπορούν να επικαλεστούν αυτό την δικαστική εντολή (την οποία φυσικά έδωσε ο ανώτατος δικαστής των ΗΠΑ) μλεις θα γίνταν οποιαδήποτε διαρροή ότι έχουν τους σέρβερ τους ανοιχτούς σε NSA και GCHQ (η βρετανική NSA).

Η NSA δεν ήταν μνή της σε αυτό την έξρυση δεδομένων, η GCHQ της Βρετανίας και οι ομλόγοι τους σε υπηρεσίες στον Καναδό, την Αυστραλία και τη Νέα Ζηλανδία ήταν όλοι μαζί στην

επιχειρήση σε μια συμφωνία, γνωστ? ως "Π?ντε μ?τια."

?πως γρ?φει ο Harding, στην προσπ?θει? της να κ?νει τους Αμερικανο?ς πιο ασφαλ?ς, η NSA ?χει κ?νει την αμερικ?νικες επικοινων?ες λιγ?τερο ασφαλ?ς και ?χει υπονομε?σει την ασφ?λεια του συν?λου του Διαδικτ?ου εισ?γοντας μια " π?σω π?ρτα " στο λογισμικ? κρυπτογρ?φησης που χρησιμοποιε?ται για την προστασ?α των προσωπικ?ν και εταιρικ?ν δεδομ?νων, ?πως αρχε?α υγε?ας και οικονομικ?ν συναλλαγ?ν.

?να απ? τα πιο αποκαλυπτικ? θ?ματα ?ταν ?τι ο γενικ?ς διευθυντ?ς της Εθνικ?ς Υπηρεσ?ας Ασφαλε?ας, Keith Alexander ισχυρ?στηκε ?τι τα αμφιλεγ?μενα προγρ?μματα μαζικ?ς συλλογ?ς δεδομ?νων στο εσωτερικ? της χ?ρας ε?χε ε?χαν αποτρ?ψει τον εντυπωσιακ? αριθμ? των 54 τρομοκρατικ?ν συνομωσι?ν, αφ?νοντας να εννοηθε? ?τι ?λες αυτ?ς εξυφα?νονταν στην Αμερικ?.

?πως σημει?νει ο Harding, ο αναπληρωτ?ς της Εθνικ?ς Υπηρεσ?ας Ασφαλε?ας Chris Inglis στη συν?χεια παραδ?χθηκε ?τι μ?λις μια ντουζ?να απ? αυτ? τα χτυπ?ματα ε?χαν σχ?ση με τις ΗΠΑ. ?ταν επ?σης ασαφ?ς ως προς το αν αυτ?ς οι συνομωσ?ες ?ταν πραγματικ?ς .Μερικ?ς απ? τις αναφορ?ς που ?δωσε ε?χαν να κ?νουν με οικονομικ?ς δοσοληψ?ες.

?τσι λοιπ?ν αυτο? που παραμ?ρφωσαν την αλ?θεια που σ?γουρα ?ξεραν τι ?καναν, με?νανε ατιμ?ρητοι, εν? το πρ?σωπο που ?φερε στο φως παρανομ?ες και αντισυνταγματικ?ς δραστηρι?τητες, κατηγορε?ται ο προδ?της. Π?ς μπορε? αυτ? να ?χει ν?ημα σε μια δημοκρατ?α; Σαφ?ς, οι εξελ?ξεις αυτ?ς δεν ε?ναι απλ? απομονωμ?να γεγον?τα σε μια ιστορ?α γραφειοκρατ?ας που υπερβα?νει τις αρμοδι?τητ?ς της. Αυτ? που ο Edward Snowden ?φερε στο φως ε?ναι ?τι οι κυβερν?σεις των δ?ο κορυφα?ων δημοκρατι?ν του κ?σμου εν?ργησαν σαν δικτατορ?ες.

Αντ? να οδηγηθε? στη λ?ψη αυστηρ?ν μ?τρων, να σφ?ξει τα λουρι? οργανισμο?ς που ε?παν ψ?ματα και να συγκαλ?ψει πιο εξωφρενικ? στραβοπατ?ματα τους, ?σπευσαν να τους υπερασπιστο?ν. Αν?τεροι αξιωματο?χοι της βρετανικ?ς κυβ?ρνησης κατηγ?ρησαν την εφημερ?δα Guardian για προδοσ?α, σε τ?τοιο βαθμ? που αν?γκασε το προσωπικ? της να καταστρ?ψει τους υπολογιστ?ς με τα αρχε?α του Snowden. Ταυτ?χρονα, η κυβ?ρνηση των ΗΠΑ χρησιμοποιε? ?λα τα διαθ?σιμα μ?σα για να εντοπ?σει τον Σν?ουντεν και να τον δικ?σει.

Το πιο λυπηρ? ?μως ε?ναι ?τι δεν τον αποκαλε? μ?νο η κυβ?ρνηση προδ?τη αλλ? και ο απλ?ς κ?σμος. Η λα?κ? κατακραυγ? δεν ε?ναι και τ?σο μεγ?λη στις ΗΠΑ. Οι Αμερικανο? επιδεικν?ουν μ?λλον απ?θεια, θεωρο?ν ?τι ε?ναι εντ?ξει να παρακολουθε? η κυβ?ρνηση τα μ?ιλ ? τα τηλεφων?ματ? τους. Τελικ? για τις καταγγελ?ες για την πλ?ρη παρακολο?θηση ΤΩΝ ΠΑΝΤΩΝ ακ?μα και του ?διου του Ομπ?μα απ? οποιονδ?ποτε υψηλ?βαθμο πρ?κτορα της CIA σταμ?τησαν να ασχολο?νται τα καν?λια, αλλ? για το π?ς θα συλληθε? αυτ?ς που μας το γνωστοπο?ησε μας τα πρ?ζουν κ?θε μ?ρα, για να μας πουν ?τι ?ποιος το λμ?ει και αποκαλ?πτει την αλ?θεια και την παραβ?αση της νομιμ?τητας θα κυνηγι?ται μ?χρι τ?λους.

Το πρ?βλημα με τους Αμερικανο?ς ε?ναι ?τι, ας τους παρακολουθο?νε και π?τε π?νε στην τουαλ?τα ακ?μα, ?χουνε πραγματικ? καταπιε? το τυρ?κι και τις μπαρο?φες και την προπαγ?νδα των γερακι?ν και του Fox, αλλ? ?τσι και προσπαθ?σει κ?ποιος να περιορ?σει τα ?πλα και να δ?σει δημ?σια και -σχεδ?ν- δωρε?ν υγε?α για παρ?δειγμα, θα αρχ?ζουν να φων?ζουν για πραξικ?πημα

και για κομμουνισμ?.

Κλασσικ?ς ΗΠΑ

Ο κ?σμος χρει?ζεται ανθρ?πους σαν τον Σν?ουντεν.

?να ?τομο λογικ? με επιχειρ?ματα που κ?νει επιλογ?ς με β?ση τη συνε?δηση του και π?νω απ? ?λα διαθ?τει θ?ρρος.

Παραθ?τω και κ?τι ωρα?ο που ?χει πει:

«Δεν θ?λω να ζω σε μια κοινων?α που κ?νει τ?τοια πρ?γματα.Δεν θ?λω να ζω σε ?ναν κ?σμο ?που οτιδ?ποτε λ?ω, οτιδ?ποτε κ?νω, σε οποιονδ?ποτε μιλ?ω, κ?θε ?κφραση δημιουργικ?τητας ? ?ρωτα ? φιλ?ας καταγρ?φεται...». ?ντουαρντ Σν?ουντεν

Ο ?νθρωπος αυτ?ς ε?ναι ?ρωας για μ?να.

Προτρ?πω τους π?ντες να το διαβ?σουν. ?λλωστε η ασφ?λεια δεδομ?νων / υποκλοπ? δεδομ?νων και συνομιλι?ν θα ?πρεπε να μας απασχολε? ?λους.

Αξ?ζει να δε?τε και το ντοκιμαντ?ρ Citizenfour, που δε?χνει το χρονικ? των συναντ?σεων του ?ντουαρντ Σν?ουντεν με τον δημοσιογρ?φο, Γκλεν Γκρ?νγουολντ. Η ταιν?α αποτυπ?νει τις γεμ?τες ?νταση ημ?ρες που π?ρασε ο Σν?ουντεν στο Χονγκ Κονγκ και τις εκμυστηρε?σεις του, στους δημοσιογρ?φους της Washington Post και της Guardian, πριν αυτο? προβο?ν στις γνωστ?ς αποκαλ?ψεις για τις παρακολουθ?σεις που προκ?λεσαν το παγκ?σμιο ενδιαφ?ρον.

Colibri says

Ο **Luke Harding**, ?κανε μια εκπληκτικ? δουλει?, συγκεντρ?νοντας ?λο το υλικ? σε ?να ενια?ο κε?μενο. ?να συναρπαστικ? αφ?γημα, με γρ?γορο ρυθμ?, το οπο?ο διαβ?ζεται απνευστ?.

Συστ?νεται ανεπιφ?λακτα!

«Δεν θ?λω να ζω σε ?ναν κ?σμο ?που οτιδ?ποτε λ?ω, οτιδ?ποτε κ?νω, σε οποιονδ?ποτε μιλ?ω, κ?θε ?κφραση δημιουργικ?τητας ? ?ρωτα ? φιλ?ας καταγρ?φεται...»

«Βλ?πεις πρ?γματα που ?σως ε?ναι ανησυχητικ?. ?ταν δεις τα π?ντα συνειδητοποιε?ς ?τι ορισμ?να απ? αυτ? τα πρ?γματα ε?ναι καταχρηστικ?. Η α?σθηση περ? αδικ?ας ενισχ?εται. Δεν υπ?ρξε κ?ποιο συγκεκριμ?νο πρ?ιν? [που να σηκ?θηκα αποφασισμ?νος ?τι δεν π?ει ?λλο]. ?ταν μια φυσιολογικ? διαδικασ?α»

«...οι κατασκοπευτικ?ς υπηρεσ?ες της Δ?σης ?δειχναν να μην αντιλαμβ?νονται την ευρ?τερη εικ?να: ?τι το κρ?τος τ?ρα πια συν?λεγε αδιακρ?τως τις επικοινων?ες εκατομμυρι?ων ανθρ?πων, χωρ?ς τη γν?ση ? τη συγκατ?θεσ? τους.»

«Τα ζ?μπι ?ταν ?λοι εκε?νοι που δεν γν?ριζαν ?τι το iPhone πρ?σφερε στην υπηρεσ?α κατασκοπε?ας ν?ες δυνατ?τητες παρακολο?θησης που δεν μπορο?σε καν να φανταστε? ο αρχικ?ς Μεγ?λος Αδελφ?ς. Οι "καταναλωτ?ς" ?ταν τα ανεγκ?φαλα πειθ?νια στρατιωτ?κια του ?ργουελ.»

«Στην αντιδικ?α για το ποιος ελ?γγει το διαδ?κτυο, οι ?νθρωποι της NSA ?διναν μια δυσσο?ωνη απ?ντηση: "Εμε?ς".»

«Στην εποχ? της κυριαρχ?ας των δεδομ?νων, η υπηρεσ?α μετατοπ?στηκε απ? το ειδικ? στο γενικ?? απ? τη στοχοπο?ηση στο εξωτερικ? σε εκε?νο που ο Σν?ουντεν χαρακτηρ?ζει ως "καθολικ?, αυτ?ματη, μαζικ? παρακολο?θηση".»

«Οι Ηνωμ?νες Πολιτε?ες πραγματοποιο?ν εν?ργειες αντικατασκοπ?ας χρησιμοποιο?ντας πληθ?ρα μ?σων. ?να απ? τα πλ?ον αποτελεσματικ? ε?ναι η συνεργασ?α με εμπορικ?ς φορε?ς για την απ?κτηση πρ?σβασης σε πληροφορ?ες μη διαθ?σιμες με ?λλον τρ?πο»

«Το Facebook αποκ?λυψε ?τι το τελευτα?ο εξ?μηνο του 2012 ?δωσε τα προσωπικ? δεδομ?να 18 με 19.000 χρηστ?ν σε δι?φορες κρατικ?ς υπηρεσ?ες των ΗΠΑ, ?χι μ?νο στην NSA αλλ? και στο FBI, σε ομοσπονδιακ?ς υπηρεσ?ες και σε τοπικ?ς αστυνομικ?ς αρχ?ς.»

«Θεωρητικ? ε?μαστε ανεξ?ρτητο κρ?τος. Πρακτικ? ?μως ?χι.»

«...τα προγρ?μματα των μαζικ?ν παρακολουθ?σεων της NSA που αποκ?λυψε "δεν μας παρ?χουν ασφ?λεια". Σ?μφωνα με τα λεγ?μεν? του: «Τραυματ?ζουν την οικονομ?α. Τραυματ?ζουν τη χ?ρα μας. Περιορ?ζουν τη δυνατ?τητ? μας να μιλ?με και να σκεφτ?μαστε και να ζο?με και να ε?μαστε δημιουργικ?, να ?χουμε σχ?σεις, να συναναστρεφ?μαστε ελε?θερα... Υπ?ρχει τερ?στια απ?σταση αν?μεσα στα ν?μιμα προγρ?μματα, στη θεμιτ? κατασκοπε?α, στη σ?ννομη επιβολ? του ν?μου ?ταν ε?ναι στοχευμ?νη και βασ?ζεται σε θεμιτ?ς εξατομικευμ?νες υποψ?ες και εν?ργειες β?σει εντ?λματος, και στην καθολικ? μαζικ? παρακολο?θηση που θ?τει ολ?κληρους πληθυσμο?ς κ?τω απ? κ?ποιο μ?τι που βλ?πει τα π?ντα, ακ?μα κι ?ταν δεν χρει?ζεται.»

Shaun says

Great . . . if you're a journalist and like the fast-paced action and efforts by the Guardian to protect freedom of the press and the First Amendment. Curious that a newspaper in the UK is seeking protection of the First Amendment when the UK does not even have either a Constitution or Bill of Rights like we enjoy here in the US. It begs the question: Where was the US Press -- or the Fourth Estate -- when all this was happening under our noses? To ask the question is to answer it: asleep at the wheel. Suddenly Mr. Snowden's choice in seeking assistance from reporters with the Guardian looks that much more inspired and brilliant to me.

Otherwise, the book is "average" to "good" if you are just a plain ol' reader like me. Seemed to be a lot of self-aggrandizement by Mr. Harding and the folks at the Guardian. Makes Snowden out to be a "patriot" and not the "traitor" he is alleged to be. Sure makes the NSA and our politicians -- especially the White House -- as well as the politicians in the UK, look absolutely terrible with all their obvious lying to Congress, lying to each other, lying to the American, UK and world citizens, double-dealing, back sliding, and whatever other invective you wish to direct toward them.

Not "All The President's Men" but not a stinker either.

Arun Divakar says

Life as we know it is now almost entirely on the internet. When we are not on the phone (which in itself is a rare thing), we are on the computer or the tablet swimming in the ocean of the internet. We live, play, work, love and trade on the internet and build our entire identities there. I will complete this review and post it on an online forum which is again an irony from the POV of the book. Imagine the kind of information that is available in the world of the internet, everything we have ever read and written, every financial transaction made, every phone call and video call is all out there for someone to grab and use if they have enough resources to do so.

The million dollar question is : is someone doing this snooping ? The world believed that this wasn't until Edward Snowden came out of the woodwork and unveiled what the Germans called *der shitstorm*, the extensive reach of the American NSA in breaching online privacy. The kind of revelations that Snowden brought to the limelight has led to businesses, individuals and nations to rethink the extent of American penetration into their lives. This book is a chronicle of Snowden's defection, his subsequent reveals with the help of The Guardian group and his subsequent exile.

The fact that Snowden who was a contractor with the NSA had such extensive access to the documents does itself question the access controls placed by the agency on its sensitive material. The book does not go into the details of how the documents were eventually smuggled out. Although in the trailer for Oliver Stone's *Snowden*, Joseph-Gordon Levitt tosses something resembling a Rubik's cube as he walks out of the security check. Snowden is introduced as a geeky young man who enlists in the army to be discharged for a broken leg and later with his formidable computer skills, he finds a job with the CIA. While initially he is a geek who is all gung-ho about his move into the cloak and dagger world of espionage, his move into NSA shakes him completely. According to The Guardian and Snowden, this was a period when he understood how much American intelligence had penetrated the world and all of it made him completely disillusioned. He moves to Hong Kong and with the help of the newspaper group begins to run a series of articles which expose the massive surveillance conducted by the US and UK on a post 9/11 world.

There followed a furore all over the world in which the world nations, the corporates and the common citizens angrily responded to the extent to which their privacy was violated. And yet if the book is to be believed, the Obama administration was strangely nonchalant and in denial mode all through this. There were a lot of hand wringing and impassioned pleas from the American side of the fence that all of this was done to counter another 9/11. It then came as a surprise to the law makers that even in the Congress, the opinion was divided on what good the increased amounts of spying into the lives of citizens was doing and also to whether the NSA really needed to be reined in. Not much has changed in the world and being the secretive organization it is, we don't know what the NSA is up to now. The Snowden effect was more visible in terms of the steps that netizens adopted all over the world following the revelations. Technology companies and consumer electronics (read Apple) have made the encryptions stronger and hopefully made it difficult for the snoops to find their way into the maze of information. Research also points to the fact that terrorist outfits have made their digital security stronger too which sums up the fact that across the globe there is a heightened awareness of the need for systems which are tamper proof.

Snowden obviously became a global fugitive and is currently in Russia with another side effect being that to a section of the Americans, he is also a traitor. Post this book and my reading on this topic, I don't find in Snowden a hero or a revolutionary. He is a symbol or more aptly a channel of communication which told the world to be on their guard. His morals or ethics are subjects to be debated about and since this book was published by The Guardian, they always treat their subject with a tenderness. But we need to step beyond him as an individual and come to terms with the extent to which the global intelligence network has spread. There is mention in the book of an operative who put his girlfriend on electronic surveillance after they had a spat and I fail to understand the threat to national security in such a case ! The term 'abuse of power' assumes gargantuan proportions when viewed at through such a prism. Also to note is the reaction meted out to the newspaper from the British authorities following the scoop which leads you to wonder about the freedom of the press.

A timely if not slightly dated book but still worth a read. Lesson learned is also that : Pretend it is the 1980's and that there is no Wi-Fi, talk to another person instead of texting them !

?A.J.? says

A truly enjoyable read. Personally, I would've given it a 5 stars rating, but it took on a more speculative tone and left me with a few questions (which I couldn't really decided whether the Author purposefully intended to or simply hadn't answers for) that probably got me all riled-up to want to get them answered.

Yanper says

Δεν ε?ναι λογοτεχνικ? βιβλ?ο ε?ναι ?μως αρκετ? ενδιαφ?ρον. Σου δ?νει μ?α ελ?χιστη εικ?να απ? τον θαυμαστ? κ?σμο των μυστικ?ν υπηρεσι?ν και του κατεστημ?νου. Βλ?πεις π?σο μακρι? ?βλεπε ο Οργουελ και ανατριχι?ζεις. Διαβ?ζοντας το δεν μπ?ρεσα να μην ξεκαρδιστ? στα γ?λια ενθουμ?μενος τις γραφικ?ς αναρτ?σεις στο ΦΒ, " ενημερ?νω το ΦΒ ?τι δεν επιτρ?πω την χρ?ση των προσωπικ?ν μου δεδομ?νων, φωτογραφι?ν, μπλα μπλα μπλα." Δεν ξ?ρω αν ε?μαστε τ?σο αθ?οι ? τ?σο αφελε?ς.

Liza Vourdaha says

?πειρες πληροφοριες.Πολλα ονοματα,πολλες ημερομηνιες.Ακρωσ διαφωτιστικο σχετικα με την υπ?θεση Σνοουντεν...Τα MME τελικα πιο πολυ παραπληροφορο?ν και καθοδηγο?ν παρα ενημερ?νουσ.

Mal Warwick says

When the news broke late in May 2013 about a junior contract employee of the National Security Agency (NSA) who had fled to Hong Kong with a collection of top secret documents about US intelligence practices in his possession, I didn't pay a great deal of attention. Nor did I think much of it when the first stories surfaced in the Guardian and the Washington Post that were based on the purloined documents. The headlines merely seemed to confirm what we in the public had learned from previous disclosures about widespread surveillance of US citizens by the NSA.

Then subsequent articles began making clear the previously unknown scope, depth, and character of the NSA's prodigious abilities to scoop up unprecedented volumes of communications data all across the globe. I was shocked to learn that the US government had bugged the personal cellphones of Angela Merkel, Enrique Pena Nieto, Dilma Rouseff, and dozens of other world leaders. My eyes bugged out when I discovered that the NSA was stealing all the data that coursed through the cables used by Google, Yahoo!, Microsoft, and other Internet companies. And I did a double-take when I learned that the NSA wasn't alone in this global data-mining endeavor — that Britain's GCHQ and their counterpart agencies in Canada, Australia, and New Zealand were all in business together under an agreement known as "Five Eyes."

Now, having read Luke Harding's terrific new book, *The Snowden Files*, I know how much worse the problem is.

As Harding writes, "[p]aradoxically, in its quest to make Americans more secure, the NSA has made American communications less secure; it has undermined the safety of the entire internet" by inserting a "back door" into the encryption software used to protect personal and corporate data such as health records and financial transactions.

Clearly, these developments aren't simply isolated events in a tale of a bureaucracy exceeding its brief (as bureaucracies are wont to do). In a larger sense, what Edward Snowden brought to light is that the governments of two of the world's leading democracies acted more like dictatorships. Rather than clamp down on the rogue agencies that lied to conceal their most outrageous missteps even from senior elected officials, their leaders instead rushed to defend them to the hilt. Simultaneously, the US government used all available resources to track down Snowden and put him on trial for treason. Senior officials in the British government accused the Guardian of treason, too, and even at one point forced its staff to smash to bits the computers that were holding the files transferred from Snowden.

Treason? Really?

One of the most revealing episodes in this sad drama was the claim by General Keith Alexander, Director of the National Security Agency, that the wholesale data-scooping had enabled the NSA to stop 54 terrorist plots. As Harding notes, "Alexander's deputy Chris Inglis subsequently conceded that only about a dozen of these plots had any connection to the US homeland. Then he said that just one of them might have been disrupted as a result of mass surveillance of Americans. (He was also ambiguous as to whether the plots were

real ‘plots;’ some of the citations he gave had more to do with financial transactions.)”

So, a four-star US general accountable for the actions of his 40,000-person agency publicly distorted the truth — almost certainly knowing what he was doing — and got off scot-free, while the person who brought to light his agency’s illegal and unconstitutional activities was charged with treason! How can this possibly make sense in a democracy?

Yet there are even broader implications to this story.

The surveillance state and the future of democracy

Assume, for the sake of argument, that Barack Obama spoke sincerely in his 2008 campaign for the presidency when he promised to “strengthen privacy protections for the digital age and ... harness the power of technology to hold government and business accountable for violations of personal privacy.”

Contrast that with the president’s remarks in January 2014 on the subject of government surveillance, when he responded in a major address to the publication of the Snowden documents detailing massive privacy abuses by the NSA. He heralded a series of largely cosmetic changes in procedure but insisted “the men and women of the intelligence community, including the NSA, consistently follow protocols designed to protect the privacy of ordinary people.”

In other words, candidate Obama pledged to turn back some of the egregious abuses of Americans’ civil liberties introduced by the Bush Administration — while president Obama unapologetically defended them, just as he had in 2010 by signing the renewal of the notorious Patriot Act.

To my mind, this blatant turnaround reflects two major aspects of the new reality that now characterizes American government: first, that the president is not an all-powerful chief executive but must routinely accept as fait accompli much that has become established practice in the federal government, no matter how he might feel about it; and, second, that the intelligence establishment, lavished with unlimited funds and highly permissive laws by decades of protective presidents and compliant congresses, has grown out of control.

What does that say about the future of democracy in America?

Think about it. Read *The Snowden Files* – if only because Luke Harding is an excellent writer. This book reads more like a thriller than a work of nonfiction, and it’s clearly based on extraordinary access to many of the principals in the story.

And if you want to delve more deeply into the present-day reality of the US intelligence establishment, read *Top-Secret America* by Dana Priest and William M. Arkin, and *The Way of the Knife* by Mark Mazzetti. Taken together, these three books paint a chilling picture of the intelligence establishment that has increasingly dominated America’s role in the world and, more recently, limited the scope of our freedom at home.

Trish says

Radio and TV coverage of the Snowden leaks were spotty. This book helped to fill in the details, background, and what happened since Snowden showed up in Moscow. Snowden himself, and his girlfriend Lindsay Mills, are fleshed out a little more, and I learned why an American would go to British journalists, the *Guardian*, with the information he had purloined. It turns out the British, specifically their top-secret

telecommunications monitoring arm, GCHQ, collaborated with the NSA: “We have the brains: they have the money. It’s a collaboration that’s worked very well.” [Sir David Omand, Former GCHQ Director] No shortage of egoism and despotism to go around, then.

Snowden was a right-wing libertarian in early writings on the web as a user he called ‘TheTrueHOOHA’. It was frankly unsettling for me to read/listen to his thinking as a teen, and see his progression to action. To use his words, he would like to be viewed as a patriot who believes in the right to privacy enshrined in the U.S. constitution. When I’d first learned of his leaks, I was startled. Listening to his first interview on TV, I was admiring. After reading this book, I am unsettled.

Luke Harding, a *Guardian* reporter, outlines the Snowden action for us with a minimum of sensationalism but with some incredulity at the scope of the revelations. And the news is pretty sensational. Harding gives a little background into Snowden’s early development, and his foray into working as a U.S. government contractor specializing in the protection of U.S. government communications. Snowden’s amazed and amazing reach into the lives of others via their private data transfers must vindicate the paranoid. While I have my doubts that any world leader or business executive thought their telecommunications were truly secret, Snowden’s revelations are startling in the scope of the data collection and in the holes in the system, e.g., a relatively low-level contractor had access to the material.

I should probably state from the get-go that I do not fear my government. I grew up in an age where inaction was much more to be expected than action; incompetence and bureaucratic bungling was much more common than overreach. I was not subject to the kind of totalitarian control experienced in Eastern Bloc countries, the Soviet Union, or China, but we have those examples to know it can happen. I believe the president and his minions who claim that the government is not listening to the communications of private citizens. They simply do not have the capacity, nor the interest, to do that. However, they now apparently have the means, and *individuals* within governments can have a deleterious effect upon the stated objectives of government. Snowden has shown us a place where an individual might have an outsized effect to his purported role.

Knowing just what I know now, if I had to make a judgment on Snowden’s fate, I might say he should go to court congruently with the leadership of the NSA and the GCHQ. I don’t think it would have been possible for him to “go up the chain of command” to protest this data collection. It is ridiculous to contemplate that anyone would have listened to him, given the reaction from our fearless leaders upon learning of his revelations. But I wish things had gone differently...for him and for us.

I listened to the Random House Audio version of this title, very ably read by Nicholas Guy Smith. I had a look at the paper copy as well, and found it concise enough that the momentum never lagged. Since *Guardian* reporters were the ones that initially broke this story, it is reasonable that they are the ones to write the details of what happened and the follow-up. I can’t imagine there is a person out there who wouldn’t be interested in this topic. Inform yourselves. This is going to be a political topic for some years to come.

Bettie? says

[Bettie's Books (hide spoiler)]

Jeanpierre says

For those of my generation, you will recall reading 1984 and Brave New World. The debate was how society might evolve toward some form of totalitarian control. In fact today both forms, drugs and invasion of privacy are complimenting each other to reach such goal. Snowden's book written by The Guardian's journalist shows how far this pervasive spying on everyone is been carried out through the internet, phone and all digital tools.

The point that Bin Laden knew that and did not even have a phone line to his house take away any argument that it is helpful to catch terrorist.

This is a book that all should read to be aware that everything written is read potentially by NSA staff. Hi NSA handier, hope you gave a good day.

James Roberts says

First off, I'd like to apologize for not posting earlier. I finished the book a couple of months ago, and have only recently found the time to write a review. As to the book, I appreciated it because of its perspective. In my opinion, I feel that the message is simple, concise and unbiased. As opposed to what you will get from the American mass media, the UK media etc., we are given an inside view of the thoughts and reasoning behind the actions of a young man who felt compelled to out what he felt were the disingenuous actions of the US and UK government. I respect the actions taken, after the regular channels had been exhausted, to no avail. I am of the opinion that the great machine that is the government is neither concerned for nor respectful toward any action that does not preserve or strengthen it's agenda - to amplify and solidify the need for governance. This book laid out the details in an understandably chronological way, and from multiple perspectives as to lead the reader to make their own assumptions about the validity and motive of Snowdens' series of actions. What I found refreshing, was that for the first time in a very long time, I was able to read the details, without constantly being reminded by the mass media and the government, about how I was supposed to feel. The book was well done, to the point, and an easy read - never boring or lagging.

Vasilis Kalandaridis says

Εξαιρετικ?.Η πρώτη μου φορά που διαβάζω τ?τοιου ε?δους βιβλ?ο.?χει στοιχε?α,ημερομην?ες,μαρτυρ?ες,κρ?σεις,ερωτ?ματα,?λα.Και επιτ?λους κατ?λαβα τι ακριβ?ς ?γινε στην υπ?θεση Σν?ουντεν,η τηλε?ραση μ?λλον μπερδε?ει αντ? να πληροφορε?.

Charity says

When the Patriot Act first passed in the wake of the 9/11 attacks, I was part of a group that organized panel discussions and protests against the act. The kind of wholesale surveillance revealed by Edward Snowden was exactly the kind of thing, we feared, for which the Patriot Act paved the way. And although the

consensus (as far as there is one) seems to be that the post-9/11 surveillance techniques of the NSA overreach even the provisions of the Patriot Act, the law allowed for just a little hop-skip to the place where we are today. So, while my inclination is to say, "I told you so," no one really cares what I thought when the act was first passed so why bother saying it?

A commenter on the radio asserted that the U.S. is divided into two camps, those who think Edward Snowden is a hero and a patriot and those who think he's a traitor. I would argue there's a third camp of people who know his name but don't know anything else about him, but the division is the source of the point I'm trying to make. I've been inclined to think of Snowden as a hero from the beginning, and I'm even more inclined to think so after reading *The Snowden Files*. I'm also inclined to ask my many computer-savvy friends for advice on encryption software for my laptop. Not because I'm engaged in illegal activities, but that's the whole point: the NSA is hoovering up data from everyone, not just from suspected terrorists. If I pissed off someone in the government, I'm sure they could come up with enough evidence from my internet search history and my library records to cobble together a case against me, or against anyone.

The thing I don't quite understand is why more people---myself included---aren't totally up-in-arms (figuratively speaking) about Snowden's revelations. Why are so many of us just going about business as usual? Is it because we assume we have nothing to hide, and so we're leaving things be and letting it up to the journalists to be targeted as terrorists for reporting government actions that flout our rights under the Constitution? Or is it because we already assumed we had no privacy and so this new information doesn't really bother us? As one friend puts it, "I assume they already have all of my information anyway."

But about the book: I enjoyed this book. It was a pleasant (if disturbing) read. I admit, I skimmed the "Shoot the Messenger" chapter in which Harding goes into detail about the inner workings of British government. I'm still an American, after all, and hearing about what happens in other countries kind of makes me glaze over. I was astounded, however, at the grounding of the flight of the president of Bolivia when he was suspected of smuggling Snowden out of Russia (he didn't, btw). No wonder some other countries think of the U.S. as a big bully throwing its weight around.

So, my next action is to procure Greenwald's book about the contents of the Snowden leaks, and to maybe buy myself a typewriter and start visiting people in person more often rather than calling or e-mailing.

Elina says

Εντ?ξει...μια καταγραφ? των γεγον?των. Σημαντικ? ιστορικ? γεγον?ς, αλλ? δεν ?χω ?ποψη για το θ?μα και δεν γνωρ?ζω αν τελικ? ?λλαξε κ?τι απ? αυτ? που περιγρ?φεται τ?σο Οργουελικ?, ?τι ?λοι παρακολουθο?μαστε απ? τα social media κλπ. Ξ?ρουμε κατ? β?θος και χωρ?ς αδι?σειστες αποδε?ξεις ?τι ισχ?ει, αλλ? σκ?φτομαι ?τι ?σως ?λο αυτ? με τον Σνο?ντεν, να ?γινε για να μας κοιμ?σουν ?τι ?λα λειτο?ργησαν καλ? και δεν μας παρακολουθο?ν πια. Ποι?ς ξ?ρει ?μως την αλ?θεια;
