



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on June 18, 2013

Guardian Posts Live Chat with Edward Snowden

On Sunday, June 16, national newspaper  [USA Today](#) published an interview with three former National Security Agency (NSA) whistleblowers: Thomas Drake, William Binney, and J. Kirk Wiebe. The testimony of each fully corroborates the details of the surveillance apparatus revealed recently by the latest defector from the Panopticon — Edward Snowden.

Not surprisingly, the shorter version of the tale told by the trio is: We told you so. The article reports:

For years, the three whistle-blowers had told anyone who would listen that the NSA collects huge swaths of communications data from U.S. citizens. They had spent decades in the top ranks of the agency, designing and managing the very data-collection systems they say have been turned against Americans. When they became convinced that fundamental constitutional rights were being violated, they complained first to their superiors, then to federal investigators, congressional oversight committees and, finally, to the news media.

One of the three, Thomas Drake, was interviewed by *The New American* last May. In that interview, Drake recalled how within hours after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the federal government rapidly ramped up the unconstitutional surveillance of Americans on a wholesale level. Drake told *The New American*:

My first day on the job as an employee of the NSA was 9/11. At that time, many people were complaining that certain projects being conducted by the NSA were permitting the government to spy on Americans. I knew at that moment they had crossed the Rubicon, that a Pandora's box had been opened. I also knew at that moment that if I remained silent, I would be complicit in the violation of the Constitution.

While working as a senior executive at the NSA, Drake disclosed to the *Baltimore Sun* that the NSA's Trailblazer Project, a project intended to analyze data carried on in the United States and elsewhere through the Internet, cellphones, and e-mails, not only violated the Fourth Amendment's proscription against unwarranted searches and seizures, but it was a "billion-dollar computer boondoggle."

All three men were persecuted and prosecuted by the federal government for their so-called betrayal. For his part, in April 2010 Drake was indicted by a federal grand jury of several crimes, including the violation of the Espionage Act. If convicted of the charges against him, Drake faced up to 35 years in federal prison.

Jesselyn Radack, attorney for all three men and representative of the Government Accountability Project, reported to *The New American* that the government's prosecution of Drake left him devastated. "His intelligence career is over, his finances are drained and he is personally spent," Radack reported during the 2012 interview.

As a result of this witch hunt, Drake was forced out of his NSA job and was later found working at an Apple retail store in the Washington, D.C. area.

Early in the summer of 2011, after several exposés ran in newspapers and on television, the Obama



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administration dropped all the charges against Drake in return for Drake's guilty plea to a misdemeanor of misusing NSA computers. Drake was sentenced to one year of probation and community service.

Binney and Wiebe were treated equally as harshly and appallingly by a federal spying apparatus bent on protecting its secrets and quickly silencing any who dare break ranks with the watchers.

In a story that sounds substantially similar to Drake's, Wiebe's, and Snowden's, Binney released information revealing that the U.S. government was collecting personal data from its citizens without warrant or probable cause. While working at the NSA, Binney oversaw the deployment of a secret surveillance software application called Thin Thread. Thin Thread was created to protect "national security" after September 11.

A [story published by the Government Accountability Project in 2012](#) reports that in return for his service to the cause of liberty, Binney "had a gun pointed to his head as he stepped out of the shower." The FBI reportedly seized Wiebe's computers.

Having survived the government's attempts to deprive them of their property, defame their characters, and demoralize them, the three now feel "vindicated." As *USA Today* reports:

They say the documents leaked by Edward Snowden, the 29-year-old former NSA contractor who worked as a systems administrator, proves their claims of sweeping government surveillance of millions of Americans not suspected of any wrongdoing. They say those revelations only hint at the programs' reach.

Despite the mouthpiece media's attempt to make Snowden the subject of the story, constitutionalists and civil libertarians recognize that the focus of any investigation should not be Snowden, but rather the federal government's unrepentant abrogation of the fundamental rights protected by the Fourth Amendment.

With regard to the role played by Snowden, Thomas Drake sees him as a catalyst for necessary change. Drake told *USA Today*:

He's [Snowden's] an American who has been exposed to some incredible information regarding the deepest secrets of the United States government. And we are seeing the initial outlines and contours of a very systemic, very broad, a Leviathan surveillance state and much of it is in violation of the fundamental basis for our own country — in fact, the very reason we even had our own American Revolution. And the Fourth Amendment for all intents and purposes was revoked after 9/11.

September 11 was only the first step in a steadily accelerating descent toward constant surveillance. While President George W. Bush ordered the initiation of many of the Panopticon-like programs, his successor — the self-proclaimed champion of the whistleblower — has carried on the construction of the gulag.

On Monday, the *Guardian* (U.K.) [held a live chat](#) with a man the newspaper identified as Snowden. During the 90-minute question-and-answer session, Snowden lamented President Obama's participation in and expansion of the sprawling surveillance apparatus.

In response to a question posed by a chat participant, Snowden praised Drake, Binney, Bradley Manning, and other whistleblowers for their courage in defense of the Constitution. The man the *Guardian* says was Snowden said:



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Binney, Drake, Kiriakou [the CIA official who confirmed the waterboarding torture of al-Qaeda prisoners], and Manning are all examples of how overly-harsh responses to public-interest whistleblowing only escalate the scale, scope, and skill involved in future disclosures. Citizens with a conscience are not going to ignore wrong-doing simply because they'll be destroyed for it: the conscience forbids it. Instead, these draconian responses simply build better whistleblowers. If the Obama administration responds with an even harsher hand against me, they can be assured that they'll soon find themselves facing an equally harsh public response.

Referring to the effect of his leaks, the man put forth by the paper as Snowden explained, "This disclosure provides Obama an opportunity to appeal for a return to sanity, constitutional policy, and the rule of law rather than men." "He still has plenty of time to go down in history as the president who looked into the abyss and stepped back, rather than leaping forward into it," he added.

Despite Snowden's vestigial optimism, history demonstrates that once the muscle of tyranny develops in the body politic, it never atrophies.

The NSA, the IRS, the Justice Department, the Department of Homeland Security, the FBI, and other executive branch agencies are being converted into a modern day Stasi — the notorious East German secret police.

With a scope and sophistication that their Cold War predecessor could only imagine, however, the contemporary domestic spy services are listening, labeling, and leveraging every call, text, e-mail, and electronic communication.

In 2013, telling the truth is treason, quoting the Constitution is quaint, and attempting to preserve fundamental liberty is tantamount to terrorism.

Photo of Hong Kong man participating in live chat with Edward Snowden: AP Images

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