



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on March 12, 2014

Snowden at SXSW: I Would “Absolutely” Do It Again

Former NSA subcontractor and whistleblower nonpareil, Edward Snowden, appeared Monday at the annual South by Southwest (SXSW) Festival in Austin, Texas.

Speaking via Google Hangout from Russia — where he has lived since being granted asylum by Vladimir Putin last August — Snowden accused the NSA of “setting fire to the future of the Internet” and called on participants to become “firefighters.”



The chromakey screen behind Snowden displayed a parchment copy of the Constitution, and he mentioned that document, declaring that members of the “tech community” can help “enforce our rights.”

Regarding his own commitment to our founding document, Snowden said, “I took an oath to support and defend the Constitution, and I saw that the Constitution was being violated on a massive scale.”

As [The New American has reported](#), the NSA has violated the Constitution’s protection against unwarranted searches and seizures by collecting the phone records of millions of Americans, almost all of whom were never accused of any crime and no warrant was ever sought.

During his SXSW address, Snowden spoke of the chilling effect of the NSA’s snooping. “We rely on our ability to trust communications. Without that, we don’t have anything,” Snowden said. “Every citizen has something to lose,” he added. “If we allow NSA to continue unrestrained, it gives other governments the green light to do the same.”

Free and unmonitored communication is one of the fundamental checks on the growth of despotic government. Our Founder’s ability to exchange information under the nose of the British occupiers was critical to their defeat of the overwhelming forces of King George III.

What did Snowden get for his efforts to expose the U.S. intelligence community’s egregious and systemic disregard of constitutional restraints on government surveillance? Three felony criminal charges.

In June, 2012 the Obama administration [charged Snowden with espionage](#).

According to the criminal complaint filed by the federal government against Snowden in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, he will be charged with theft, “unauthorized communication of national defense information,” and “willful communication of classified communications intelligence information to an unauthorized person.”

The last two counts are violations of the Espionage Act of 1917.

Given all that has happened in the eight months since he leaked the NSA’s secrets to Glenn Greenwald (including having Senator Lindsey Graham calling for him to “followed to the ends of the earth and [brought] to justice”), Snowden would be forgiven for having a bit of whistleblower’s remorse. But he has none.



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When asked if, knowing what he knows now, he would do it all over again, Snowden responded, “Absolutely, yes.”

Days before his Austin appearance, Snowden submitted [a 10-page written testimony](#) to a European Union committee investigating the mass surveillance disclosed by Snowden’s revelations.

Although in his statement Snowden points out that he’s not revealing anything not already publicly known, he does highlight a few aspects of the construction of the global surveillance state that has gone underreported.

One of the most incredible points made in his EU testimony regards the NSA’s Foreign Affairs Division (FAD). According to Snowden, the FAD makes repeated appeals to European governments to pass laws allowing the NSA to “legally” monitor the electronic and telephonic communications of citizens of those countries. The most menacing element of the finagling is the use of the Internet backbones that run through Germany to enable the NSA to technically conform to German law forbidding the snoops from listening in to strictly German communications while in reality enabling them to violate it by claiming they detected the activity via the Internet.

Snowden told the EU committee that such de facto lawmaking is “the surest way for any nation to become subject to unnecessary surveillance.”

We now live in a world where agents of the U.S. government are able to monitor and record all the real and cyber activity of every American, in direct and hostile violation of the Constitution and basic principles of liberty.

Joe A. Wolverton, II, J.D. is a correspondent for The New American and travels nationwide speaking on nullification, the Second Amendment, the surveillance state, and other constitutional issues. Follow him on Twitter @TNAJoeWolverton and he can be reached at jwolverton@thenewamerican.com.



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