

Media, Government Denounce Snowden as “Traitor” and “Chinese Spy”. Cheney: “I think he has Committed Crimes”

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Global Research, June 17, 2013

[World Socialist Web Site](#)

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Intelligence](#), [Police State & Civil Rights](#)

Representatives of the national security apparatus, including former Vice President Dick Cheney, appeared on the Sunday morning news programs to denounce Edward Snowden as a traitor and a Chinese spy.

The programs appeared highly scripted. The ruling class is relying heavily on a barrage of lies in its attempt to cover up the historic nature of the Obama administrations vast domestic surveillance programs, the extent of which grows daily as new details emerge.

“I think he’s a traitor,” Dick Cheney said on Fox News Sunday. “I think he has committed crimes, in fact, by violating agreements given the position he had... I think it’s one of the worst occasions in my memory of somebody with access to classified information doing enormous damage to the national security interests of the United States.”

The program host, Chris Wallace, then asked Cheney: “Do you think he was a spy all along for the Chinese? Do you think he’s using this information to try to buy asylum from the Chinese?”

Cheney replied, “I’m deeply suspicious, obviously, because he went to China... So this raises questions whether or not he had that kind of connection before he did this. The other concern I have is whether or not he had help from inside the [National Security] Agency, that is to say, was there somebody else in NSA who had access to a lot of this stuff and passed it to him?”

The liberal wing of the corporate media repeated these baseless claims. On NBC’s “Meet the Press” program, host David Gregory asked Republican Senator Saxby Chambliss, “Is [Snowden] a traitor? Should he be tried as a traitor?”

Chambliss replied, “If he is not a traitor, then he’s pretty darn close to it... He needs to look an American jury in the eye and explain why he has disclosed sources and methods that are going to put American lives in danger. We know now that because of his disclosures, that the terrorists, the bad guys around the world are taking some different tactics. They know a little bit more about how we are gathering the information on them, and I think it’s important that we bring him to justice.”

Earlier in the show, Gregory had posed a similar question to Republican Senator Lindsey Graham. “Edward Snowden, is he a traitor in your mind, and what would you like to see the administration do at this point to get him back to face justice?”

Graham replied: "Bring him to justice, and let a prosecutor make that decision, not a politician. But I think what he did compromised our national security. And I've got a very simple view of the world, and you can blame me for being simple in complex times... We need this program, and he's compromised it, and he should be held accountable."

The statements of Chambliss, the ranking minority member of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, and Graham, a member of the Senate Committee on Armed Services, are part of a bipartisan campaign to denounce Snowden for "treason," in his efforts to provide information to the American people about the extent of the antidemocratic and illegal actions of the US government.

The Obama administration is preparing criminal charges against Snowden, and leading Democrats have denounced him for "treason."

On the same program, "Meet the Press," co-host Andrea Mitchell took up the task of character assassination of the young whistleblower.

"He had a lot of very provocative, sarcastic, sardonic comments about the PATRIOT Act," she said disparagingly. "Hard to tell when you're reading [online] message boards, but you could tell that this was a very edgy guy."

Former NSA and CIA head Michael Hayden appeared apoplectic. When asked by Gregory if it was problematic that private contractors had access to the surveillance programs, Hayden responded with visible anger: "No. No. That's not the issue. It's people of this personality type having access to this issue. So let me point out facts: Snowden is wrong."

The obsequious role of David Gregory is especially notable. Throughout the show, he made certain that the conversation did not stray from the talking points that were likely provided by the White House.

At one point, the host said, "You know, but it's very interesting, because as some commentators this week have pointed out, those who are concerned with civil liberties, imagine their reaction if there was another 9/11 style attack. And what the American public would support in quashing civil liberties."

In an attempt to justify the blatantly unconstitutional surveillance programs, Gregory gave a word-for-word reading of a document that the administration is using to justify laying the foundations of the police state. The document, "Joint Inquiry into Intelligence Community Activities Before and After 9/11," is from December 2002.

"Prior to September 11th," Gregory read as the text appeared in a full-screen graphic, "the Intelligence Community's ability to produce significant and timely signals intelligence on counterterrorism was limited by NSA's failure to address modern communications technology aggressively, continuing conflict between Intelligence Community agencies, NSA's cautious approach to any collection of intelligence relating to activities in the United States, and insufficient collaboration between the NSA and FBI regarding the potential terrorist attacks within the United States."

"So," Gregory said, "the NSA after 9/11 was criticized for being too cautious, which is why we got these programs in the first place, isn't that true, Senator Chambliss?"

Later, during a roundtable discussion, Gregory broke apart a discussion to state categorically, “We are a country where we shouldn’t be comfortable with a 29-year-old disaffected contractor who is personally offended by a program, and takes it upon himself to leak government secrets and compromise what the government in three branches thinks is important.”

There is little doubt that hosts like Gregory, Wallace and their ilk are reading questions and documents from memos provided by the White House and the national security apparatus.

But attempts by these “journalists” and their military and government guests to sway international public opinion against Edward Snowden are falling short.

Despite ubiquitous condemnations from the media and the entire political establishment, a *Time Magazine* poll found that 54 percent of Americans believe that Snowden did a “good thing” by releasing information about the government surveillance plans, opposed to a mere 30 percent who said the information leak was a “bad thing.”

A poll conducted by British pollster Opinium/Observer found even wider support amongst the population of Great Britain. Forty-three percent of Britons believed that Snowden is “brave and should be heard, not prosecuted.” Only 23 percent disagreed.

Support for Snowden is strongest in Hong Kong. Nearly 50 percent of respondents to a *South China Morning Post* poll said they oppose or strongly oppose Snowden’s extradition to the United States, with approximately one in six saying they support extradition.

Of additional significance were comments made Sunday morning by author and *New York Times* columnist James Risen on “Meet the Press.” His comments denote the true purpose behind the Obama administration’s domestic surveillance programs.

“You’ve created something that never existed in American history before, and that is a surveillance state,” Risen said. “The infrastructure, basically using software technology and data mining and eavesdropping, very sophisticated technology, to create an infrastructure that a police state would love, and that is what really should concern Americans, because we haven’t had a full national debate about the creation of a massive surveillance state and surveillance infrastructure, *that if we had some radical change in our politics, could lead to a police state*” (emphasis added).

The comment was passed over by program host Gregory and the other roundtable guests, but its meaning is clear: the ruling class is preparing the foundations of the police state in anticipation of widespread opposition to the attack on the living conditions of the working class.

The target of the PRISM, metadata, and other unknown surveillance programs is not Al Qaeda, which is receiving weapons from the CIA in Syria. Rather, the principal objects of surveillance are workers and youth whose hostility to imperialist wars and social counterrevolution makes them a threat to the maintenance of the privileges of the ruling class.

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