

Democrats spearhead campaign against Snowden as evidence of illegal spying mounts

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The US government, abetted by the media, is intensifying its campaign against former intelligence employee Edward Snowden for leaking evidence of massive and illegal spying.

The Obama administration is preparing to file criminal charges and is pushing for Snowden's extradition from Hong Kong. Snowden has said that he fears for his safety and has fled his hotel for an undisclosed location.

On Friday, US Attorney General Eric Holder vowed that the US government would punish those responsible for leaks relating to government surveillance programs, which he characterized as "extremely damaging." At a news conference in Dublin, he said he was "confident that the person who is responsible will be held accountable."

"The safety of the American people and the safety of people who reside in allied nations have been put at risk as a result of these leaks," Holder claimed. In fact, Snowden has revealed spying operations that target both the American people and the population of the entire world.

The more that is revealed about government criminality, the more determined is the insistence from leading officials that Snowden himself, the one revealing this criminality, should be subject to criminal prosecution. As Trotsky put it, "the real criminals hide under the cloak of the accusers."

The spying programs revealed so far include one that gathers the phone records of nearly every person living in the United States. Another monitors Internet activity, emails and other electronic communications from people all over the world. Snowden has also provided information related to US government hacking, over a period of several years, of Chinese universities, public officials, businesses and students.

In response to these revelations, the media, in close coordination with the government, is leveling ever more hysterical and unsubstantiated charges against Snowden. An article posted Friday by Fox News asked the question, "Edward Snowden: Whistleblower or foreign agent?" suggesting that Snowden was working with the Chinese government.

"As the story unfolds, one key question stands out: is Snowden the heroic whistleblower he claims to be or something more sinister?" The article claimed that "some" are "questioning his motives and wondering whether claims that he wanted to right a perceived wrong are true—or whether he could be a modern-day double agent, cleverly hiding his actions and painting himself as a victim of the US government while working as an agent for the Chinese."

Democrats are leading the campaign against Snowden. House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi called for the prosecution of Snowden on Thursday, saying, "I think on three scores—that is leaking the Patriot Act section 215, FISA 702, and the president's classified cyber operations' directive—on the strength of leaking that, yes, that would be a prosecutable offense," Pelosi told reporters at her Capitol Hill news briefing. "I think that he should be prosecuted."

Pelosi expressed anxiety that the program could be so easily brought under public scrutiny: "How on earth can we have a situation where we are so vulnerable, so exposed, with so much information about how we acquire intelligence, to the point that the [director of national intelligence] is saying that it seriously hurt our national security?" she fretted.

This week, US intelligence officials briefed members of the House of Representatives and Senate in secret meetings hidden from public view. Lawmakers were informed that the spying programs are far more

expansive than what has been so far revealed.

Speaking after a classified briefing on the NSA surveillance, US Representative Loretta Sanchez acknowledged, “What we learned in there is significantly more than what is out in the media today... I can’t speak to what we learned in there... I think it’s just broader than most people even realize, and I think that’s, in one way, what astounded most of us, too.”

“The federal surveillance programs revealed in media reports are just ‘the tip of the iceberg,’” she added.

In a column published on Friday, Glenn Greenwald, the *Guardian* journalist who has published the leaks from Snowden, confirmed that Sanchez is “absolutely right” in her assertion that what has been revealed thus far is “the tip of the iceberg,” adding that he will soon publish “significant revelations that have not yet been heard.”

On Friday, *Bloomberg* reported that “Thousands of technology, finance and manufacturing companies are working closely with US national security agencies, providing sensitive information and in return receiving benefits that include access to classified intelligence.” The information provided by these companies, according to “four people familiar with the process” cited by Bloomberg, is used to “help infiltrate computers of [the US government’s] adversaries.”

According to the news agency, “Some US telecommunications companies willingly provide intelligence agencies with access to facilities and data offshore that would require a judge’s order if it were done in the US, one of the four people said. In these cases, no oversight is necessary under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, and companies are providing the information voluntarily.”

As part of the international witch-hunt directed against Snowden, the UK has threatened to fine airlines for transporting the whistleblower to British soil.

Geoffrey Robertson, a lawyer from London, told the *New York Times* that this measure was unprecedented, saying, “This is a power hitherto used only against those who incite terrorism, race hatred, and homophobia —never before against whistle-blowers.” According to Robertson, the British government is concerned that judges in the UK might rule against Snowden’s extradition to the US on the grounds that this would lead to him undergoing “oppressive treatment akin to that being meted out to Bradley

Manning.”

The leading role of the Democrats in implementing the assault on democratic rights was on further display during Thursday’s congressional vote on the 2014 National Defense Authorization Act. The fiscal year 2012 NDAA, signed by Obama, contained provisions allowing for the indefinite detention of US citizens without due process.

An amendment submitted by Republicans to this year’s NDAA, which funds the military, says that nothing in US law can deny citizens the right to a court hearing. The amendment passed, with only three Democrats voting for it.

The NDAA amendment was a cynical maneuver that will have no effect on US policy and will almost certainly be stripped from the final version before it passes the Senate. A stronger version of the same amendment was rejected. Nevertheless, it exposes the Democratic Party’s full support for the destruction of democratic rights in the US.

The reaction of the ruling elite, abetted by the media, is a product of its deep fear that what Snowden has revealed—unconstitutional and illegal programs that have been systematically concealed from the American people—will further undermine the legitimacy of their system in the eyes of millions.



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