

Former NSA chief Hayden praises Obama for “doubling down” on Bush-era spying

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Michael Hayden, the former director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and National Security Agency (NSA), used a lecture at Oxford University Monday to candidly praise the Obama administration for constructing and exponentially strengthening the NSA’s illegal spying apparatus.

Hayden told his Oxford audience that while many people see Obama as being “quite different” than Bush, he had in fact “doubled down” on the NSA’s global espionage system.

In the 90 minute address, titled “My Government, My Security and Me,” Hayden also stressed that there was little support within US government circles for offering any kind of plea deal to former NSA contractor and whistleblower Edward Snowden.

Referring to the speech delivered by Obama last month announcing supposed “reforms” to the NSA’s operations, Hayden stated, “The president is essentially trading some restraint, some oversight, in order to keep on doing fundamentally what he has been doing.”

Put in the plainest terms: the government is employing some window-dressing to quell popular outrage over the NSA’s colossal ongoing violation of the Constitution and is also trying to ensure that leaks do not threaten the secret program’s legitimacy in the future. As the WSWWS noted at the time, “the only measure that is likely to be enacted is a proposal to institute strict new vetting and security policies designed to prevent anyone from following in the footsteps of Edward Snowden.”

Hayden, a retired four-star general in the US Air Force, was director of the NSA from 1999 to 2005. During this time, many of the domestic spying programs being exposed today were initiated. Following his directorship, Hayden became the principal deputy director of National Intelligence. A

post and department formed after 9/11, the office of the Director of National Intelligence integrates all the different branches of intelligence, including those of the separate branches of the military, the NSA, CIA and FBI as well as other agencies. Finally, from 2006 to 2009 he served as director of the Central Intelligence Agency.

Coming from this position of unparalleled intimacy with all of the criminal operations carried out under the Bush administration, from wars of aggression to torture and domestic spying, Hayden expressed satisfaction in Obama’s record over the past five years of deepening these crimes and giving free rein to the military and intelligence apparatus.

“I guess what I am saying is this president, who most people view as being quite different than his predecessor, doubled down on a program being done under his predecessor,” he told his Oxford audience. “He gave the American intelligence community a pretty big box.”

During his talk, Hayden dismissed the idea of clemency for Snowden. “There have been arrangements but I do not think there is a lot of enthusiasm inside the US for that kind of deal,” he said.

Edward Snowden, currently exiled in Russia, has been the subject of an international campaign of slander and intimidation by the United States government. US officials and members of the press have spoken openly about murdering him.

While there might not be a “lot of enthusiasm” in American ruling circles for clemency, a Quinnipiac University poll from late last year found that 55 percent of registered American voters saw Snowden as a whistleblower, compared to 34 percent who saw him as a traitor. Snowden is most popular among the youth, with 60 percent of 18 to 29 year olds saying they are

“well-served” by Snowden’s leaks.



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