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The public case of Edward Snowden's release of top secret information affected the National Security Administration's (NSA) security and surveillance system as well as the NSA’s internal systems. The ethical quandary here relates to the balance of security, privacy, and transparency. On the one hand, the NSA must maintain the secrecy of its data to protect national security. On the other hand, the public has a right to know about government surveillance practices and how their data is being used. Also, If the NSA had been more transparent and accountable within its own organization, it may have been able to identify and address the issues before they became public. The case also affected the public's trust in the government. The ethical quandary here involves the idea of informed consent: whether the government should have informed the public of its security and surveillance practices before Edward Snowden released the information.

The media was also heavily affected by this case, and the ethical quandary here relates to the balance of security, accuracy, and privacy. The media must be careful not to put national security at risk by releasing sensitive information yet must also be accurate in their reporting and protect the privacy of individuals involved in the case.