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Systems Theory - Grid Summary

The public case I decided to investigate was “Edward Snowden's release of Top Secret information about National Security Administration security and surveillance practices”. The larger technical and socio-technical systems that I found that were affected were the average american citizen, the american government, surveillance companies and other governments around the world. The ethical quandary that Snowden faced was to leak the confidential information to the american public to show how the government was surveilling them, and face the consequences as described below.

The first few ethical quandaries I investigated were related to the relationship of the american government with its citizens. First, this issue led to an increased public distrust in the government, which affected the american citizens and the american Government. American citizens did not know and did not want to be constantly surveyed by the government in spaces that they had assumed they had privacy. Thus, this caused the american public to distrust many of the activities that go on in the government and NSA, possibly voting to decrease funding of some agencies. Another ethical quandary related to this was the citizen distrust of any product with some surveillance capabilities, such as laptop cameras, or phone cameras, which affected the american citizen and surveillance companies. Thus, this has led to many people becoming suspicious of the government accessing these items to spy on the american public, and as a result many have begun physically blocking these items, or being more hesitant to purchase them.

Another group of ethical quandaries I investigated was the effect of this case on the other governments of the world. The relationship between the american government and other world governments were weakened as snowden released information that the american government was secretly spying on operations in other countries that were supposed to be kept secret. Another quandary that goes hand in hand with this one, is that this case damaged important ongoing investigations, which affected the american government and other governments around the world. Some data that was being collected belonged to important cases to stop potentially dangerous individuals, or dangerous government decisions. Now with the surveillance publicly known, these cases could no longer be continued, and it would potentially leave these destructive things to occur instead of being stopped. One other ethical quandary this issue has led to was that it set a precedent of governments watching its citizens, which affected the american government and other governments around the world. America showed it was possible to survey many of its public, and some countries like China have begun taking this to the extreme, and have many restrictions on technology for its public in order to easily restrict/watch their whereabouts and general thoughts throughout each day.