The Role of Leakers and Whistleblowers in Cyberwar

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The actions of leakers often caused great embarrassment to government agencies that would prefer to keep their secrets from public view. Throughout history, whistleblowers have come forward to call attention to questionable government actions and have been met with mixed reactions. In fact, Modern technology allows whistleblowers to steal large amounts of government information and release them to the public.

Edward Snowden is a former defense contractor who released a massive amount of information about the alleged operations of the NSA in 2013(1). Snowden also made extensive allegations against the GCSB, New Zealand’s most powerful intelligence agency, blowing the whistle on their domestic surveillance of New Zealanders and acts of espionage under John Key's government (2).

On June 21, 2013, the United States Department of Justice unsealed charges against Snowden of two counts of violating the Espionage Act of 1917 and theft of government property. Two days later, he flew into Moscow and stay there ever since.

Although many civil rights activists have branded Edward Snowden as a hero whistleblower, pro-government activists have branded him a traitor to his country. U.S. officials condemned his actions as having done "grave damage" to the U.S. intelligence capabilities. His disclosures have fueled debates over mass surveillance, government secrecy, and the balance between national security and information privacy.

In July 2013, media critic Jay Rosen defined the "Snowden effect" as "Direct and indirect gains in public knowledge from the cascade of events and further reporting that followed Edward Snowden's leaks of classified information about the surveillance state in the U.S. In December 2013, The Nation wrote that Snowden had sparked an overdue debate about national security and individual privacy.

References

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Wikipedia (n.d.) Edward Snowden. Retrieved from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward_Snowden> (2)