

《CCTV9英语新闻：斯诺登称使命已经完成》

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Edward Snowden declares his mission accomplished

Former US National Security Agency contractor Edward Snowden, has declared his "mission accomplished". The fugitive whistleblower is currently in exile in Russia, to avoid facing charges for leaking up to 1.7 million secret documents to the media. In a newly published interview, he outlines a public interest argument for opening up his former employer to worldwide scrutiny over the astonishing breadth of its electronic surveillance activities.

Declaring "Mission Accomplished" to the Washington Post newspaper Edward Snowden says he "wanted to give society a chance to determine if it should change itself".

Among the Internal US National Security Agency documents he leaked were those demonstrating that the private fiber-optic data cables of major US Internet companies were being tapped abroad with cooperation from Britain's GCHQ spy agency.

That has enabled the NSA to gather billions of pieces of data each day on the phone and Internet activity of millions of people and the exact location of millions of mobile phones, which are stored on giant databases.

This activity was in addition to legally sanctioned requests in the United States for specific data made directly to the US tech and phone companies.

"The tech companies feel that if the NSA wanted the information all they had to do was knock on their front door, instead of going around the back door and kicking it in and getting the information without their knowledge," Brandon Andrews, former staffer of US Senate, says.

Fifteen major tech firms including Google, Apple, Yahoo and Twitter are now lobbying Washington to "move aggressively" to curb the mass extraction of data.

Earlier in the year President Obama set up an expert panel to work out ways to reform America's surveillance system.

"You can't have 100 percent security and also then have 100 percent privacy and zero inconvenience. We're going to have to make some choices as a society," Obama says.

That panel has now made 46 recommendations, including the scrapping of a massive phone database of calls made and received in the United States.

Meanwhile, two proposed surveillance reform laws are making their way through Congress, including the USA Freedom Act, which would end the NSA's bulk data collection practices.

"The USA Freedom Act would also significantly limit the kind of wholesale collection ability. It would say that you have to have a good reason connected to an open investigation to be able to access this type of meta data," Andrews says.

President Obama maintains that the goal of such activities has never been to interfere in the private lives of ordinary people.

The NSA maintains that it only uses its expansive database to track and investigate those who threaten US national security.

It's clear that the fugitive whistleblower's actions have eroded public trust and are likely to lead to changes in the way the US government conducts electronic surveillance worldwide. The extent of those changes now depends on what members of Congress are prepared to pass in 2014.

