

Where Intelligence Goes to Work Community Comment

Mike Goldsby, June 20, 2013

"Intelligence. It's the ability to think abstractly. Challenge the unknown. Solve the impossible. And at the National Security Agency, it's about protecting the Nation. A career at NSA offers the opportunity to work with the best, shape the course of the world, and secure your own future. Isn't it time to put your intelligence to work?"

That is the opening paragraph from the National Security Agency Website, in the cyber career opportunities section. This is where you would go to learn about vacancies and apply for jobs online. This is the place that hired Edward Snowden.

Snowden is the young man who revealed that he was paid to collect information on American Citizens from the Internet, Microsoft, Facebook, Google, Verizon and more. He basically bolted from his high paid job to expose the practice of collecting information about U.S. citizens. Some liberals and Libertarians hail his act as heroic. Others condemn him as a criminal for exposing our surveillance activities.

I admit I am pretty naïve about cyber security and spying on computers and telephone calls. I was not surprised to hear that the NSA was amassing telephone records of every call made in the US.

I was surprised that a 29 year old high school dropout could have a high security job and make over \$200,000 a year.

Snowden dropped out of high school and admits he was not a stellar student. He attended a community college to get his GED, studied computing, but never completed the coursework.

In 2003, he enlisted in the US army and began a training program to join the Special Forces. An accident forced his early discharge.

He soon got his first job in an NSA facility, working as a security guard for a covert facility. From there, he went to the CIA, where he worked on IT security.

By 2007, the CIA stationed him in Switzerland. His responsibility for maintaining computer network security meant he had clearance to access a wide array of classified documents. He later defected and announced to the world that this NSA information was being collected and misused.

Congress was aware of this program's existence but perhaps not its scope. Senator Angus King is an Independent from Maine. He's only been in office 5 months and he said he was aware of the NSA program.

We are now being reassured that there are numerous checks and balances on the information. But a reasonable person should still be suspicious. We are being assured that the system has prevented acts of terrorism and violence. I find that plausible. Dick Cheney said this system could have prevented the attacks of 9 11 and I believe that.

I think of myself as a private person but I need to reassess that in our modern world. I suppose researching this Community Comment put me on somebody's list somewhere, for looking up cyber security jobs on the NSA website.

I think college is important, but I am glad there are good jobs out there that do not require a degree. But I do want proof that our security system will still treat me like a person and not just a number.

This is 786-9426 for Community Comment.