General Information

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Description

Once described by President Barack Obama as a "29-year-old hacker," Edward Snowden took a mind-boggling amount of information from the National Security Agency, impacting relations between the United States and several key countries.

Keywords

Edward Snowden, Spying, Espionage, Spy, NSA, National Security Agency, Leaks, Data, Data Collection, Intelligence, Barack Obama, President, Hacker, Hacking, Mike Rogers, Representative, House Intelligence Committee, Technology, Defense Intelligence Agency, Security, Cybersecurity, Michael Leiter, James Clapper, Theft, Crime, Xi Jinping, China, Europe, Germany, Angela Merkel, Chancellor, Dimla Rousseff, Brazil, Vladimir Putin, Russia, Propaganda, Foreign Policy, International Relations, Diplomacy

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CHICAGO MANUAL OF STYLE

Transcript
Reality Check- What Was Edward Snowden's True Impact?
BRIAN WILLIAMS, anchor:
Andrea Mitchell, our Chief Foreign Affairs Correspondent, has been going through what we just heard from Edward Snowden and the claims he makes now about his job history, title, and background. She has joined us tonight from our DC newsroom. And, Andrea, so it begins, this was the most basic predicate prior to getting into our conversation with him that lasted several hours.
ANDREA MITCHELL, reporting:
Indeed, Brian. No matter what people think of Edward Snowden, there's no question. He had an enormous impact on U.S. Intelligence and influence far greater than his official resume. Who is Edward Snowden? Here's how the administration and Congressional critics described him when he first exposed the secret surveillance program:
PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: No, I'm not going to be scrambling jets to get a 29 year-old hacker.
MITCHELL: And this from the leaders of the House Intelligence Committee.
REPRESENTATIVE MIKE ROGERS (R-House Intelligence Committee Chairman): I think he was lying.
MAN: I think he's a legend in his own mind.
REPRESENTATIVE ROGERS: He clearly has overinflated his position. He has overinflated his access, and he's even overinflated what the actual--the technology of the programs would allow one to do.
MITCHELL: What does the record show? From our reporting the Defense Intelligence Agency says Snowden was a guest speaker at three of their conferences on military cyber security including one in Japan, focusing on the Chinese cyber threat. Critics and supporters acknowledge Snowden is whip smart, able to get into the system, know what he was taking, cover his tracks, plot his escape. Michael Leiter is an NBC analyst and serves on an NSA Advisory Panel.
MICHAEL LEITER: The amount of information that Snowden was able to exfiltrate from the NSA is truly mind-boggling and it does show real weaknesses on NSA’s part of protecting that information.
MITCHELL: Do they even know to this day how much he took.
LEITER: The government is still working through to understand exactly what Edward Snowden got.
MITCHELL: What is also undisputed Snowden's impact has been huge.
JAMES CLAPPER (Director of National Intelligence): I'm speaking, of course, about the most massive and most damaging theft of intelligence information in our history by Edward Snowden.
MITCHELL: It started right away. Two days after Snowden's first leak, the President in his first summit with China's President Xi, was on defense over cyber war. Instead of demanding that China stop attacking America's computers, officials say Xi told them, "You are the aggressor." Also damaging documents, Snowden supplied to journalists, revealing that the U.S. spied on America's most important European ally, Germany's Angela Merkel and on Brazil's President Dilma Rousseff, who called off a state visit to Washington, to say nothing of handing Vladimir Putin a huge propaganda victory. Snowden's disclosures not only damage the President's relationships with allies it's also hurt the President's credibility with a key part of his political base- younger people- who are among the President's most-- rather most critical of the surveillance policies.
WILLIAMS: Andrea Mitchell in our DC Newsroom tonight. Andrea, thanks. We will hear more from Edward Snowden tomorrow evening starting with this broadcast and then, of course, our hour long primetime special. It airs tomorrow night at 10, nine Central on this NBC station.