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Snowden and Greenwald: The Men Who Leaked the Secrets **By Janet Reitman, Rolling Stone, 04 December 2013**

How two alienated, angry geeks broke the story of the year

Early one morning last December, Glenn Greenwald opened his laptop, scanned through his e-mail, and made a decision that almost cost him the story of his life. A columnist and blogger with a large and devoted following, Greenwald receives hundreds of e-mails every day, many from readers who claim to have "great stuff." Occasionally these claims turn out to be credible; most of the time they're cranks. There are some that seem promising but also require serious vetting. This takes time, and Greenwald, who starts each morning deluged with messages, has almost none. "My inbox is the enemy," he told me recently.

And so it was that on December 1st, 2012, Greenwald received a note from a person asking for his public encryption, or PGP, key so he could send him an e-mail securely. Greenwald didn't have one, which he now acknowledges was fairly inexcusable given that he wrote almost daily about national-security issues, and had likely been on the government's radar for some time over his vocal support of Bradley Manning and WikiLeaks. "I didn't really know what PGP was," he admits. "I had no idea how to install it or how to use it." It seemed time-consuming and complicated, and Greenwald, who was working on a book about how the media control political discourse, while also writing his column for The Guardian, had more pressing things to do.

"It felt Anonymous-ish to me," Greenwald says. "It was this cryptic 'I and others have things you would be interested in.???' He never sent me neon lights - it was much more ambiguous than that."

So he ignored the note. Soon after, the source sent Greenwald a step-by-step tutorial on encryption. Then he sent him a video Greenwald describes as "Encryption for Journalists," which "walked me through the process like I was a complete idiot."

And yet, Greenwald still didn't bother learning security protocols. "The more he sent me, the more difficult it seemed," he says. "I mean, now I had to watch a fucking video?..?..?" Greenwald still had no idea who the source was, nor what he wanted to say. "It was this Catch-22: Unless he tells me something motivating, I'm not going to drop what I'm doing, and from his side, unless I drop what I'm doing and get PGP, he can't tell me anything."

The dance went on for a month. Finally, after trying and failing to get Greenwald's attention, the source gave up.

Greenwald went back to his book and his column, publishing, among other things, scathing attacks on the Obama administration's Guantánamo and drone policies. It would take until May, six months after the anonymous stranger reached out, before Greenwald would hear from him again, through a friend, the documentarian Laura Poitras, whom the source had contacted, suggesting she and Greenwald form a partnership. In June, the three would meet face to face, in a Hong Kong hotel room, where Edward Snowden, the mysterious source, would hand over many thousands of top-secret documents: a mother lode laying bare the architecture of the national-security state. It was the "most serious compromise of classified information in the history of the U.S. intelligence community," as former CIA deputy director Michael Morell said, exposing the seemingly limitless reach of the National Security Agency, and sparking a global debate on the use of surveillance - ostensibly to fight terrorism - versus the individual right to privacy. And its disclosure was also a triumph for Greenwald's unique brand of journalism.

Greenwald is a former litigator whose messianic defense of civil liberties has made him a hero of left-libertarian circles, though he has alienated elites across the political spectrum. Famously combative, he "lives to piss people off," as one colleague says. And in the past eight years he has done an excellent job: taking on Presidents Bush and Obama, Congress, the Democratic Party, the Tea Party, the Republicans, the "liberal establishment" and, notably, the mainstream media, which he accuses - often while being interviewed by those same mainstream, liberal-establishment journalists - of cozying up to power. "I crave the hatred of those people," Greenwald says about the small, somewhat incestuous community of Beltway pundits, government officials, think-tank experts and other opinion-makers he targets routinely. "If you're not provoking that reaction in people, you're not provoking or challenging anyone, which means you're pointless."

This perspective has earned Greenwald tremendous support, especially among young, idealistic readers hungry for an uncompromised voice. "There are few writers out there who are as passionate about communicating uncomfortable truths," Snowden, who was one of Greenwald's longtime readers, tells me in an e-mail. "Glenn tells the truth no matter the cost, and that matters."

The same, of course, could be said of Snowden, who, from the moment he revealed himself as the source of the leaks, has baffled the mainstream critics who've tried to make sense of him. "The founders did not create the United States so that some solitary 29-year-old could make unilateral decisions about what should be exposed," wrote New York Times columnist David Brooks, who held up Snowden as one of "an apparently growing share of young men in their 20s who are living technological existences in the fuzzy land between their childhood institutions and adult family commitments."

To the likes of Brooks, Snowden was a disconcerting mystery; Glenn Greenwald, though, got him right away. "He had no power, no prestige, he grew up in a lower-middle-class family, totally obscure, totally ordinary," Greenwald says. "He didn't even have a high school diploma. But he was going to change the world - and I knew that." And, Greenwald also believed, so would he. "In all kinds of ways, my whole life has been in preparation for this moment," he says.

For a man living in the middle of a John le Carré novel, Greenwald has a pretty good life. Based in Brazil since 2005, he lives about 10 minutes from the beach in the hills above Rio de Janeiro, in an airy, four-bedroom wood-and-glass house that backs directly into the jungle. There are monkeys, birds and a small waterfall, and with its sparse furnishing, the place has the feel of a treehouse. It also smells distinctly of dog - of which there are 10, rescued by Greenwald and his partner, David Miranda, whom Greenwald calls the "dog whisperer" for his Cesar Millan-like command over the pack. The dogs, which occupy every imaginable space there is, provide an ever-present backdrop to the couple's domesticity, following Greenwald and Miranda from room to room and, from time to time, breaking into exultant barks for no real reason (other than maybe just the fact that they live in paradise).

Contrary to his confrontational persona, Greenwald is actually quite sweet in person, apologizing for his car, a somewhat beat-up, doggy-smelling, red Kia with tennis clothes tossed in the back, and a Pink CD case on the dashboard that Greenwald, 46, is quick to explain belongs to Miranda, who is 28. "I still listen to all the stuff I liked in high school - Elton John, Queen," he says, shrugging, and then immediately wonders if it's weird that "music just never spoke to me all that much."

Politics, on the other hand, had a powerful hold on him from an early age. Originally from Queens, his family settled in South Florida, in the bland, cookie-cutter enclave of Lauderdale Lakes, then inhabited largely by ethnic, working-class families and wealthier Jewish retirees. The oldest of two, Greenwald was raised in a small house on the low-rent side of town, where his mother, "a typically 1960s-1970s housewife who married young and never went to college," as he says, ended up supporting her sons by working as a cashier at McDonald's, among other jobs.

Greenwald's childhood role model was his paternal grandfather, Louis "L.L." Greenwald, a local city councilman, and "sort of this standard 1930s Jewish socialist type," who crusaded on behalf of the poor against the voracious "condo bosses" who controlled the city. In high school, Greenwald ran a quixotic

campaign for a city-council seat, which he lost, but not before scoring a "moral victory" by simply challenging his entrenched opponents. "The most important thing my grandfather taught me was that the most noble way to use your skills, intellect and energy is to defend the marginalized against those with the greatest power - and that the resulting animosity from those in power is a badge of honor."

This was useful advice for a gay teen growing up in the early 1980s, during the advent of AIDS, when "being gay was thought of, genuinely, as a disease, and so you just felt this condemnation and alienation and denunciation."

Of course, all gay teens deal with their sexuality in different ways. "One is to internalize the judgment and say, 'Oh, my God, I'm this horrible, sick, defective person' - which is why a lot of gay teens commit suicide," says Greenwald. Another, he says, is to escape the judgment entirely by creating an alternate world - "which is where a lot of gay creativity comes from because this world doesn't want you." Greenwald chose a third path. "I decided to wage war against this system and institutional authority that had tried to reject and condemn me," he says. "It was like, 'Go fuck yourselves. Instead of having you judge me, I'm going to judge you, because I don't accept the fact that you're even in a position to cast judgments upon me.'"

This began a lifelong struggle against authoritative structures, beginning with his teachers, with whom he engaged in epic battles over "unjust rules," as Greenwald puts it. "Glenn was this supersmart, extremely obnoxious, eccentric kid, and depending on your sense of humor, you either loved him or hated him," recalls his friend Norman Fleisher. "He was probably the smartest kid in the school, but it's kind of a miracle that he graduated."

Greenwald's contrarian nature made him a star on the debate team, where he ran circles around his opponents and became a state champion. He enrolled at George Washington University in 1985, and spent so much time debating that it took him five years to graduate. After achieving a near-perfect score on his LSATs, he enrolled at the NYU School of Law, where, as a budding gay activist, he decided to "test the authenticity" of NYU's liberal reputation by leading what became a successful campaign to ban Colorado firms from recruiting on campus after the state's voters passed an amendment to overturn existing anti-discrimination laws.

After graduation, he accepted a job in the litigation department of Wachtell, Lipton, Rosen & Katz, called "America's most grueling law firm," which represented blue-chip clients like Bank of America, JPMorgan and AT&T. In his first year, Greenwald made over \$200,000 - more money than he'd ever seen in his life. But he found the world of corporate law "dull and soul-draining," he says. "I could not thrive or even function in a controlling institution like that. There's a huge dichotomy between people who grow up with alienation, which, for me, was invaluable, and people who grow up so completely privileged that it breeds this complacency and lack of desire to question or challenge or do anything significant. Those are the types of people who become partners at the corporate law firms."

In early 1996, the 28-year-old Greenwald, deciding he'd rather subvert the powerful than defend their interests in court, left Wachtell Lipton and opened his own practice. Consistently underestimated by big firms, he reached successful outcomes in case after case - often after deluging the opposition with motions and hundreds of pages of depositions - and insisted that his small staff wear suits, even while sitting around the office, to impose a sort of corporate discipline on a practice focused primarily on constitutional law and civil-liberties cases. He spent five years defending the First Amendment rights of neo-Nazis. It was one of Greenwald's prouder accomplishments as an attorney. "To me, it's a heroic attribute to be so committed to a principle that you apply it not when it's easy," he says, "not when it supports your position, not when it protects people you like, but when it defends and protects people that you hate."

But law, even in its purest, most civil-liberties-oriented variety, was an ultimately frustrating endeavor, full of "unjust rules" and even fewer judicious outcomes. More interesting, particularly after 9/11, were the egalitarian conversations that were occurring online. Greenwald discovered this world in the

mid-1990s when, bored at work, he'd begun cruising the CompuServe message boards, including Town Hall, a conservative forum created by the Heritage Foundation and the National Review. Instantly seduced by the chance to debate pro-lifers and other social conservatives, Greenwald soon began spending hours in heated arguments with disembodied strangers. He even, to his surprise, became friends with one or two. The Internet, he realized, was perhaps the only place where rules simply didn't apply. "I believe in the clash of ideas," he says, "and mine were being meaningfully challenged."

These free-form debates were occurring in the virtual world at precisely the same time they were disappearing from the general discourse, submerged, as Greenwald says, in the wave of "nationalism and jingoism" that followed 9/11. Greenwald first began to realize how much things had changed in the political culture after the arrest of Al Qaeda "dirty bomber" José Padilla. "The idea that an American citizen could be arrested on U.S. soil, and then imprisoned for years, not charged, and delayed access to a lawyer, that always seemed like one line that couldn't be crossed," Greenwald says. "It was more than the fact that it was being done - it was the fact that nobody was questioning it. That was a 'What the fuck is going on in the United States?' moment for me."

In the winter of 2005, Greenwald, seeking to transition away from practicing law, went to Brazil. On his second day of what was a planned seven-week vacation in Rio, he met Miranda, a handsome 19-year-old Brazilian who was playing beach volleyball not far from Greenwald's towel. The two have been inseparable ever since. "When you come to Rio as a gay man, the last thing you're looking for is a monogamous relationship," Greenwald says. "But, you know, you can't control love."

Within a year, Greenwald had decided to relocate to Brazil, where, unable to practice law, he tried his hand at political blogging. Greenwald's first week as a blogger, in October 2005, coincided with the indictment of Scooter Libby in the Valerie Plame leak case. Greenwald wrote a long post meticulously deconstructing the conservative argument against Libby's indictment from a legal standpoint, which The New Republic linked to, driving thousands of readers to his site, Unclaimed Territory. Greenwald soon turned his attention to the explosive revelation that the NSA was spying on Americans under a secret, "warrantless wiretapping" program authorized by the Bush administration.

The program was exposed in a December 16th, 2005, article in The New York Times written by investigative reporters James Risen and Eric Lichtblau. But the Times, under pressure from the Bush administration and from Bush himself, had sat on the piece for more than a year. The paper finally published the story 13 months after reporting it, and a year after Bush was re-elected. "It was as disgraceful as anything the Times has ever done in terms of betraying what they're supposed to be as a journalistic institution," Greenwald says. "After that, I decided that I needed to sort out what was actually true, and what wasn't."

Another person who was bothered by the Times' treatment of the warrantless-wiretapping story - and a number of others based on classified leaks - was Edward Snowden, a patriotic young man who dreamed of a life in foreign espionage. "Those people should be shot in the balls," Snowden, then a 25-year-old computer technician, posted to an online forum in 2009, criticizing both the anonymous sources who leaked and the publications that printed the information. "They're reporting classified shit," he said. "You don't put that shit in the newspaper.???That shit is classified for a reason."

Snowden grew up in the shadow of the biggest intelligence-gathering organization in the world - the National Security Agency - in the Anne Arundel County community of Crofton, Maryland. A solidly middle-class, planned community of 27,000 that Money has ranked as one of the "100 Best Places to Live," Crofton, like the towns around it, fed the workforce of the defense and intelligence contractors in the area. The NSA, which employs tens of thousands of people in the public and private sectors, was just 15 miles away, at Fort Meade, whose high school boasts a "homeland-security program" to funnel kids into the industry.

Virtually everyone worked for the government or in "computer technology," recalls Joshua Stewart, 30, who moved to Crofton in 1999. "You never really knew exactly what many adults did for money," he

says. There were houses with special secure phone lines - "bat phones," as Stewart, now a reporter at the Orange County Register, called them. Some even had their own Sensitive Compartmented Information Facilities in their homes.

The son of civil servants - his father, Lon, served in the Coast Guard, and his mother, Wendy, is a clerk in the U.S. District Court in Baltimore - Snowden was a skinny, quiet boy who appears not to have made much of a mark on his former classmates or teachers. The Internet, he would later tell Greenwald, was his universe. He posted regularly at Ars Technica, the technology news and culture site, where, under the username TheTrueHOOHA, he chatted about video games and queried the more experienced geeks for help improving his computer skills. "I really want to know 'how' a real web server works," he posted, at 18. He also pondered some of the philosophical underpinnings of life. "Freedom isn't a word that can be (pardon) freely defined," he wrote. "The saying goes, 'Live free or die,' I believe. That seems to intimate a conditional dependence on freedom as a requirement for happiness."

Though brilliant by every account, Snowden had been an indifferent student who'd dropped out of high school in the 10th grade. After that, he drifted in and out of community college, but never earned a formal degree. In his late teens, he spent his days surfing the Internet, practicing kung fu and playing Tekken, while casting around trying to figure out what to do. "I've always dreamed of being able to 'make it' in Japan," he said in one 2002 chat. "There have also been a couple studies that show out of qualified applicants, blondes are hired more often.???.??.?I'd love a cushy .gov job over there."

But the path to success seemed unclear. At 20, as he wrote in one post, he was "without a degree or a clearance" in an area dominated by the NSA and its private offshoots. "Read that as 'unemployed.'"

Like Bradley Manning, whose case he would later study, Snowden had an idealized view of the United States and its role in the world. He also had a gamer's sense of his own ability to beat the odds - he'd later tell Greenwald that his moral outlook had been shaped by the video games he played as a kid, in which an everyman-type battles tremendous and seemingly invulnerable forces of injustice, and prevails. Following that ethos, and deeply affected by 9/11, Snowden enlisted in the Army in 2004, hoping to join the Special Forces and fight in Iraq. "I believed in the goodness of what we were doing," he said. "I believed in the nobility of our intentions to free oppressed people overseas." But he was quickly disabused of this idea - "Most of the people training us seemed pumped up about killing Arabs, not helping anyone," he said - and months into his Special Forces training course at Fort Benning, Snowden later said, he broke both his legs and was discharged.

Back in Maryland, Snowden got a job as a security guard at the University of Maryland's Center for Advanced Study of Language, a Defense Department-funded facility he would later describe as "covert," though as The Washington Post pointed out, "its website includes driving directions." He also re-enrolled at Anne Arundel Community College and burnished his computer skills. Then, in 2006, he landed a job as a computer technician with the CIA.

The CIA, with its air of entitlement and mystery, is the most elitist of U.S. government agencies. But the beauty of the IT sector, no matter where you were, as Snowden said, was its egalitarianism. "Nobody gives a shit what school you go to???.??.?I don't even have a high school diploma," he wrote in 2006. "That said, I have \$0 in debt from student loans, I make \$70k, I just had to turn down offers for \$83k and \$180k???.??.?Employers fight over me. And I'm 22."

In 2007, he was posted to the CIA station in Geneva. Mavane Anderson, a young legal intern also stationed in Geneva, befriended Snowden and recalled him as thoughtful but insecure. "He talked a great deal about the fact that he didn't complete high school," Anderson later wrote in an op-ed for the Chattanooga Times Free Press. "But he is an IT whiz - I've always taken it for granted that he's an IT genius, actually."

Snowden came to be bothered by much of what he saw in the CIA. He would later cite an operation to recruit a Swiss banker as an asset that involved getting the man arrested on drunk-driving charges. He

also recalled, in an interview with The New York Times' Risen, the retaliation from a senior manager whose authority he'd once questioned. The incident arose over a flaw Snowden found in some CIA software, which he pointed out to his superiors. Rather than praising his initiative, however, one manager, who didn't appreciate such enterprising behavior, placed a critical note in his personnel file, effectively killing Snowden's chance for promotion. He eventually left the agency, "experiencing a crisis of conscience of sorts," as Anderson remembered. But Snowden also learned a valuable lesson: "Trying to work through the system," he told Risen, would "only lead to punishment."

As Snowden was navigating the intricacies of the U.S.-intelligence world, Greenwald continued to rail against the Bush administration and its policies, while also taking aim at the Democratic Congress for refusing to end the war in Iraq. In speaking engagements, and increasingly on television, he prosecuted his strategy to subvert the status quo by donning a suit and, in perfect and impossible-to-argue-against rhetoric, spouted the sort of radical ideology - pointing out the causal chain between U.S. foreign policy and terrorism - that would have landed anyone else in talk-show purgatory. Greenwald, though, became a regular guest on MSNBC.

"You have to learn the game," he says. "I put on a suit. I speak in sound bites. I know what I'm talking about - and I don't drone on and on. One of the main criticisms I have of Noam Chomsky is that he allowed himself to get marginalized by not ever strategizing how to prevent it. If you're an advocate and believe in political values, your obligation is to figure out how to maximize your impact. Basically, my strategy has been, 'I'm going to barge into every fucking place I can get and make my own access.'"

After Obama was elected, Greenwald alienated many of his former liberal allies by vowing to be as hard on the new president as he'd been on his predecessor. He was particularly critical of Obama's "Look forward, not backward" mandate, which effectively immunized officials who'd committed felonies during the Bush years, even as the Justice Department began to zealously prosecute its own "war" on national-security whistle-blowers.

This "two-tiered justice system," as Greenwald put it, was striking in the case of a former NSA official named Thomas Drake, whom Greenwald wrote about in 2010. Drake is famous in whistle-blowing circles for providing information to Congress about post-9/11 surveillance programs and disclosing information about mismanagement within the NSA including a costly, and failed, project, known as Trailblazer, to The Baltimore Sun. In 2010, he was indicted under the 1917 Espionage Act for mishandling classified material, though the government's case against him ultimately fell apart. Nonetheless, the investigation cost him his job, drained his savings and ruined his reputation. Today he works at the Apple Store in Bethesda, Maryland. To Greenwald, and to Snowden, Drake would be a cautionary tale of what happens to dissenters who try to work within the system.

Drake, whom I meet in his lawyer's office in Washington, is a tall, intense man with the earnest-yet-cynical bearing of a disillusioned Boy Scout. A former Navy intelligence officer, Drake spent 12 years in the private sector as a contractor, working as a systems software test engineer, among other positions. In 2001, he was hired by the NSA and assigned to its Signals Intelligence Directorate as part of an effort initiated by new NSA director Gen. Michael Hayden, to "stir up the gene pool," as Drake puts it, and overhaul the agency, a Cold War institution, for the 21st century.

Though the NSA had once led the world in areas like cryptology and electronic eavesdropping, after the fall of the Soviet Union it was underfunded and without a clear mission. Its calcified management failed to anticipate the advances in fiber optics and cellular technology that would revolutionize the rest of the world, leaving the agency "on the verge of going deaf, dumb and blind," according to NSA historian Matthew Aid. And it thoroughly failed to understand the importance of the Internet, says Drake. "The attitude was, nothing worth knowing is on the Internet, because it was open, right? They only wanted to know things that were closed."

September 11th, which also happened to be Drake's first day at Fort Meade, changed the equation. Drake explains the shift in two ways: The first was a massive expansion of U.S. spying capabilities as the

agency "unchained itself from the Constitution," and began to spy on Americans and foreign citizens, at home and abroad. The other change, felt across the entire intelligence community, was a rapid expansion of the NSA itself.

"Massive amounts of money were pumped into the NSA after 9/11, and Congress was saying, 'How big do you want the check?'" says Drake. With virtually every agency involved in tracking terrorists clamoring for its SIGINT, or signals intelligence, the NSA expanded its outposts in Texas, Georgia, Hawaii, Colorado and Utah, as well as listening posts abroad, and also went on a building spree at Fort Meade, where the NSA's sprawling 5,000-acre campus is now almost 10 times the size of the Pentagon. By 2013, according to The Washington Post, the NSA had expanded its workforce by one-third, to about 33,000. The number of private companies it depended upon more than tripled during that time.

Soon, thanks to this influx of money and the increasing reliance on the private sector to handle even sensitive jobs, the very heart of America's intelligence infrastructure was being outsourced to contractors. "Essentially, 9/11 was a massive jobs program, in which the ticket you needed for the party was your clearance," says Drake. "And tons of people were getting those clearances. So you had this huge apparatus being built, and the government was just managing it. And in some cases, they weren't even doing that."

Snowden, who left the CIA in 2009, was a natural fit for the NSA, which embraced the kind of problem-solving initiative his CIA bosses seemed to resent. "The NSA was very blue-collar, much more utilitarian than the CIA," says Drake. "If you could prove your chops with computers, it didn't matter what your background was, or what your grades were. We had a lot of people like Snowden at the NSA, who I hired. And there was no limit on the contracting side."

Snowden was initially hired as a contractor for Dell, which had large contracts to maintain the NSA's internal IT networks. He would also work for the megacontractor Booz Allen Hamilton, who last year earned \$5.76 billion almost solely from government contracts, and is considered to be involved in virtually every aspect of intelligence and surveillance.

Within the world of the NSA, there is little difference between those employed by the agency and the private sector. Where there was a clear difference, was between the conventional management types and the scruffy hackers and IT geniuses who now filled the rank and file. "It was a weird world - there were these kids walking down the halls, and I never knew what color their hair would be when I'd see them," says Richard "Dickie" George, a 40-year veteran of the NSA who, before retiring in 2011, oversaw the agency's Information Assurance Directorate in the 2000s, hiring scores of young hackers. "They had ideas us older folk didn't have, and we counted on that."

To some intelligence insiders, it also made them a risk. "There was some discussions in the beginning of 'We're going after hackers, so how do we know that they'll be good guys?'" says James Lewis, director of the Technology and Public Policy Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. "The real problem is that there's a generational difference. You have an entrenched culture at the NSA, and suddenly you bring these kids in from outside, and they have very different attitudes toward information."

By the time Snowden joined the agency's workforce, the surveillance he would later expose was becoming not just institutionalized but very big business. "It was around 2009, 2010 that you saw the full flower of that massive, massive bubble of money," says Drake. "And people were taking it for a ride as far as it could go."

This system, however, was not without its internal problems. "When you hire all these contractors to do what were inherently government functions, you need the documents that authorize these kinds of access and operations," Drake says. Paperwork was generated at record speed. Once-secret documents like FISA orders, which used to be stowed in special safes that only a few would be able to access, were now digitized and collected into a vast trove of electronic records that held the entire architecture of the

national-security state.

Snowden began his NSA career in Japan, where he was given a fairly mundane job supervising upgrades to NSA computer systems. He'd later move back to the U.S. - making a campaign donation to former congressman Ron Paul in March 2012 - and settle in Hawaii. He worked as a systems administrator and eventually as an infrastructure analyst, including within the agency's special Threat Operations Center (NTOC) on Oahu. Though he wasn't one of the elite hackers, he held the keys to highly classified computer networks, and was likely also responsible for building target lists in preparation for future cyber-conflict and looking for electronic backdoors into foreign networks. According to Aid, who has spoken to numerous sources familiar with Snowden's work, "he had access to things that no one at NSA Hawaii had access to." But to them it wasn't alarming, "it was just Ed doing his job."

Prior to 2009, Snowden had considered leaking government secrets when he was at the CIA, but held off, he later said, not wanting to harm agents in the field, and hoping that Obama would reform the system. His optimism didn't last long. "[I] watched as Obama advanced the very policies that I thought would be reined in," he later said. As a result, he added, "I got hardened." The more Snowden saw of the NSA's actual business - and, particularly, the more he read "true information," including a 2009 Inspector General's report detailing the Bush era's warrantless-surveillance program - the more he realized that there were actually two governments: the one that was elected, and the other, secret regime, governing in the dark. "If the highest officials in government can break the law without fearing punishment or even any repercussions at all, secret powers become tremendously dangerous."

Another concern was what he viewed as the willingness of big business to further government secrecy. In 2010, Snowden responded to an Ars Technica post about a vulnerability in Cisco's wiretapping system, which had been designed to meet the needs of U.S. law enforcement. "It really concerns me how little this sort of corporate behavior bothers those outside of technology circles," he wrote. "Society really seems to have developed an unquestioning obedience towards spooky types." He wondered: "Did we get to where we are today via a slippery slope that was entirely within our control to stop, or was it a relatively instantaneous sea change that sneaked in undetected because of pervasive government secrecy?"

Snowden was by then branching out to more advanced levels of -cybersecurity. In 2010, he took an "ethical hacking" course that teaches computer-security workers how hackers infiltrate large computer systems and operate invisibly. This kind of skill is highly prized in the modern NSA, where Hayden's successor, Gen. Keith Alexander, a slick promoter of cybersecurity programs that virtually no one in Congress understood, relentlessly pushed the government to grant the NSA more spying authority and more resources. "He had unfailing credibility, and they just deferred to him," says one former White House official, who grew alarmed by Alexander's ability to spin members of both Houses, and the president. "Until recently, cybersecurity was magic, and Keith Alexander was the Wizard of Oz."

As a result, Alexander was able to fully realize a concept, promoted by Hayden, of the NSA's "owning the Net" - gaining access to virtually everything. By February 2012, the agency had laid out its strategic vision in a five-page mission statement declaring its intention to acquire data from "anyone." One program in support of this goal, known as "Treasure Map," was so overarching it claimed to map out information from "any device, anywhere, all the time." The agency referred to the present as the "golden age of SIGINT."

"They built a secret surveillance system that penetrated the fabric of our society and Snowden saw all this," says Drake, who has spoken with Snowden and describes him as "like a Tron: cruising the networks and going into different systems - all for legitimate reasons. But in the course of his travels, he realized, 'Wow, could he be part of enabling this system? Could he continue to do that and live with himself?'"

Snowden has been vague about when he decided to leak, but he has been very clear on what compelled him to act. "It was seeing a continuing litany of lies from senior officials to Congress - and therefore the

American people - and the realization that Congress...wholly supported the lies," he said. "Seeing someone in the position of James Clapper - director of National Intelligence - baldly lying to the public without repercussion is the evidence of a subverted democracy."

In April 2012, while working for Dell, Snowden reportedly began to download documents, many pertaining to the eavesdropping programs run by the NSA and its British equivalent, the Government Communications Headquarters, or GCHQ. Eleven months later, he quit his job and accepted another, with Booz Allen, which he said he'd sought specifically for the broader access he'd have to the wealth of information pertaining to U.S. cyberspying. "My position with Booz Allen Hamilton granted me access to lists of machines all over the world the NSA hacked," Snowden told The South China Morning Post. He spent the following three months downloading part of what officials later estimated were well more than 50,000 documents, divided into four categories: NSA capabilities, partnerships with private tech companies and foreign-intelligence agencies, requests for information by other U.S. agencies, and intelligence reports based on its collection of electronic intercepts. Now, he had to figure out how to expose the material.

He would not, he knew, follow the path of Thomas Drake, whose case he had carefully studied, along with many other NSA whistle-blowers from the 1990s and early 2000s who had taken their grievances, often undocumented, to Congress or the press. "Look, for 12 years, much of what Snowden would disclose had already been discussed by others like myself," says Drake. "He knew, based on what had happened with us, that he'd have to provide some kind of documentation if he were to have any chance of being heard. But even that might not have been sufficient. The difference was that the whole system had become fully institutionalized."

But Snowden also understood that giving the documents to WikiLeaks, or simply posting them himself, had drawbacks. "I don't desire to enable the Bradley Manning argument that these were released recklessly and unreviewed," Snowden later said. "I carefully evaluated every single document I disclosed to ensure that each was legitimately in the public interest. There are all sorts of documents that would have made a big impact that I didn't turn over, because harming people isn't my goal. Transparency is."

The mainstream press, another option, seemed even riskier. Recalling how The New York Times delayed Risen's 2005 warrantless-wiretapping story under pressure from the government, Snowden feared the same happening to him. "When the subject of [one's] reporting is an institution as wildly beyond the control of law as the US Intelligence Community, even the best intentions of the New York Times begin to quaver," he writes me in an e-mail. "You can't stare down a spy agency without being prepared to burn your life to the ground over the smallest grain of truth, because truth is the only thing they are afraid of. Truth means accountability, and accountability terrifies those who have gone beyond what is necessary."

In mid-May, Snowden took a short leave of absence from his job at Booz Allen to return to the mainland, where, he told his supervisors, he was going to get treatment for epilepsy, a condition he'd been diagnosed with the year before. But instead, he took a direct flight to Hong Kong and, checking into the Mira, a \$300-per-night boutique hotel overlooking Kowloon Park, made contact with Glenn Greenwald. This was their first direct correspondence since December, when Snowden, who'd given up his attempts to persuade Greenwald to learn encryption, turned to filmmaker Laura Poitras, whom he knew, as Snowden told me, "understood the risks of weak security."

The director of two films that were highly critical of U.S. counterterrorism policy and the war in Iraq, Poitras had found herself in the crosshairs of the U.S. government after the 2006 release of the Oscar-nominated *My Country, My Country*, which looked at the experiences of Iraqis under the U.S. occupation. The Department of Homeland Security reportedly put her on a watch list, and over the next six years, she estimates she was stopped and detained nearly 40 times at U.S. border crossings. All of this had made Poitras intensely paranoid. (She declined to comment for this story.) To prevent her work from being spied upon, she learned encryption. That allowed Snowden, who wrote her anonymously, to outline, over the course of several e-mails, a number of government-surveillance programs.

Poitras showed some of the e-mails to Greenwald, who sensed their legitimacy right away. He installed encryption software, and under Poitras' tutelage, began his own conversation with the source, who was eager for the journalists to meet him in person. Greenwald was wary: "I told him, 'I need to have some sample of the documents to prove you are who you say you are and you have something worthwhile.'" So Snowden sent Greenwald about two dozen documents, including a PowerPoint presentation revealing the NSA PRISM program, by which the government, gaining access through U.S. Internet companies like Google, Facebook and Apple, could retrieve volumes of user data, including e-mails, chat records and search histories.

Sitting on his porch with the dogs at his feet, Greenwald opened the documents and gasped. "I mean, holy shit, right? Just out of nowhere, I'm holding in my hand 25 top-secret documents from the NSA, an agency that had rarely leaked anything, let alone massive numbers of top-secret documents." Breathless, he ran to tell Miranda. "I cannot believe what I fucking have in my hands," he said.

Greenwald flew to New York, where he met Poitras, and with a third journalist, longtime Guardian correspondent Ewen MacAskill, who'd been assigned as the paper's representative, left for Hong Kong. In the cab on their way to JFK, Poitras, who'd been sent a much larger set of documents by Snowden, gave Greenwald a short tutorial on how to open and read the files on her memory sticks. As soon as the plane took off, he opened his laptop and began to go through the material. "I immediately realized that the 25 documents he had sent me, which I thought were the best he had - those were just random," he says. "I had thousands of documents just like them, on every conceivable topic, the vast bulk top-secret, some of them much better than the ones he had sent me. It was the mother of all leaks."

"How long had the source been planning this?" Greenwald thought. Just the organization of the material alone would have taken months, if not longer. Each memory stick had an elaborate filing system. "On the front page were, let's say, 12 files. You click on one of the files and there are 30 more files. You click on one of those files and there are six more, and finally you got the documents. And every last motherfucking document that he gave us was incredibly elegant and beautifully organized." Greenwald had no doubt that the leaker had read every page; not a single one was misfiled. "It's 1,000 percent clear that he read and very carefully processed every document that he gave us by virtue of his incredibly anal, ridiculously elaborate electronic filing system that these USB sticks contained."

All the way to Hong Kong, over a 16-hour flight, Greenwald pored through the materials. "There was stuff on what's going on in Iraq, in Afghanistan, with the drone program, spying on our allies, the technology of how this works, the intelligence budget - every possible thing, all completely fucking secret, and I'm just reading through it at my leisure on the plane." Memos and PowerPoint presentations detailed the breathtaking scope of the NSA's global operations: metadata collection on American and foreign citizens; spying on the communications and Internet traffic of world leaders; intelligence operations aimed at oil companies and other businesses. Poitras, sitting a number of rows back, wandered up to check on Greenwald now and then, at which point, he says, "I'd hop out of my fucking seat, like, 'Have you seen this? Does this actually say what I think it says?'"

He describes it as his "holy shit" moment. "We just sat there in elation," he says. "For both of us, it was the moment of a lifetime."

Greenwald had an image in his head of the person he was going to meet in Hong Kong: "This grizzly, 60-year-old, gray-haired, balding veteran of the intelligence community who had just become sufficiently disillusioned and jaded that he decided he just couldn't take it anymore." Instead, the person he met outside a restaurant in a shopping center looked barely old enough to shave. Pale and thin and dressed in jeans and a white T-shirt it appeared he hadn't changed for days. "He looked like a kid from the mall," Greenwald says.

Immediately, Greenwald thought this had been a mistake. "No way could this kid have anything like the access he led me to believe he had. It just didn't compute: Was he the son of the source, the assistant to the source? It was so wildly disparate from what I had expected that I just thought I had wasted my time

flying there."

Still, the journalists, exhausted from their travels, followed Snowden to his hotel room, which he'd left only two or three times since he'd arrived, out of fear he might soon be tracked down. Stacks of room-service trays were piled everywhere. Clothes littered the floor. Worried that he might be spied upon, he'd been reluctant to even let housekeeping in to change the sheets. Before he would talk, Snowden propped pillows up against the door to prevent eavesdropping. Greenwald was tempted to view the precautions as paranoia, but decided to withhold judgment. He launched into litigator mode. "The best way to describe it would be as cross-examination," Snowden tells me. "It was more rigorous than the vetting CIA assets in the field get! The benefit was that it resulted in absolute trust: There was no room for lies to survive."

Clearly, Greenwald realized right away, Snowden was extremely bright, and his story, as improbable as it initially seemed, had coherence to it. After five or six hours of questioning, "I had a really solid faith that he was who he was saying he was." Yet much of Snowden still didn't make sense. He had a girlfriend of eight years in Hawaii, a beautiful dancer named Lindsay, whom he clearly loved. He earned a six-figure salary, and was on a career trajectory whose possibilities, even without a college degree, seemed limitless. Everything about him suggested he was happy and stable. "I spent a long time trying to figure out why he actually did what he did, knowing that he was likely going to end up in prison for the rest of his life."

Snowden - who didn't want the search for the source of the leaks to distract from the national conversation he hoped they would spark - had informed the journalists of his plan to go public even before they got to Hong Kong. The idea of outing a source of classified materials went against every instinct, both journalistic and human. MacAskill, who has three sons in their midtwenties and early thirties, says he spent days trying to understand why Snowden was so intent on doing it. But Snowden seemed to have thought it all out. He had purposely not taken all the precautions he could have to cover his tracks, he explained - arguably to protect his co-workers, who could easily be drawn into a prolonged investigation. "I could not be part of someone throwing their life away unless I was absolutely convinced that it was done with complete and total agency," Greenwald says. "So I spent hours on that question: What was this grounded in? Where does he get the idea that it was his obligation to sacrifice his life for the good of other people?"

Ultimately, Greenwald realized, Snowden was acting on the same moral code that had led him, at age 20, to enlist in the Army to fight a war he believed was designed to "free" the oppressed. What the NSA was doing, Snowden said, posed an "existential threat to democracy," and he felt it was his duty to act. He explained to Greenwald that he'd set up a website and written a manifesto explaining the breadth of the surveillance system the NSA had constructed. He'd intended to post the roughly 1,000-word essay on the website, in the hopes of getting hundreds of thousands, even millions to read it and sign a petition to end the surveillance state.

But the manifesto, as Greenwald says, "was a little Ted Kaczynski-ish." He and Poitras advised Snowden it might be misinterpreted by the public. "It was pretty melodramatic and overwrought, which makes sense, because you've got to think in pretty extreme terms if you're going to throw your life away to fight against these injustices. But to the average person you want to reach, it might sound creepy." Snowden ultimately let it go.

Greenwald spent every day with Snowden for the next two weeks, interviewing him in the morning, breaking off to write, going back later in the day, and frequently continuing their conversations online. Snowden would go to bed every night around 10:30 or 11, casually telling the journalists he was going to "hit the hay." While Greenwald barely slept, Snowden greeted them at seven each morning, rested and refreshed. "He was about to become the most wanted man in the world," Greenwald says, "but slept as if he didn't have a care in the world." Both he and Poitras were "infected" by the younger man's idealism and enthusiasm, Greenwald admits, and so were his editors at The Guardian, which published the first story on the leaks on Wednesday, June 5th. That piece, detailing a secret court order issued in April 2013

that compelled Verizon to hand over consumer data to the NSA, was followed, on June 6th, by a second story, exposing the PRISM program, and then a third, on June 7th, explaining how the British GCHQ gained access to PRISM in order to collect user data from U.S. companies. On the 8th, Greenwald and MacAskill published in The Guardian a report about an internal NSA tool, known as "Boundless Informant," which recorded, analyzed and tracked the data collected by the agency - suggesting that National Intelligence Director James Clapper had lied to Congress when he insisted that the NSA did not wittingly keep track of the communications of millions of American citizens.

From that time on, Greenwald was never without a set of documents, stored on various drives, which he carried with him everywhere in a black backpack. As for Snowden, whose greatest fear, according to Greenwald, was that he'd release the material and no one would care, just the opposite occurred. On June 7th, Obama, forced to admit that the administration was collecting huge amounts of intelligence on ordinary citizens, insisted that they were only "modest encroachments" on privacy. "You can't have 100 percent security, and also then have 100 percent privacy and zero inconvenience," the president said.

On June 8th, the NSA officially filed a "crimes report" on the exposure of their sensitive intelligence, and also opened a criminal probe into who might have leaked it. The next day, Snowden went public in a video produced by Poitras, posted on The Guardian's website. On June 10th, having acquired two Hong Kong lawyers vetted by The Guardian's legal counsel, and with the world press closing in, Snowden left the Mira hotel through a back door with his attorneys, and disappeared. Poitras wondered if they'd ever see him again. Greenwald doubted it. "I truly believed that the chances were very, very good that the next time we saw him would be on television," Greenwald says, "wearing an orange jumpsuit, in shackles, in a courtroom."

On June 21st, the Obama administration brought criminal charges against Edward Snowden for three felonies, two of which fall under the Espionage Act, which has been used in federal indictments nine times in almost a century, six of those cases being brought in the past six years. Snowden became the seventh person to be charged under the act by the Obama White House, which has launched more leak investigations than any other administration in U.S. history. A score of U.S. officials, including Secretary of State John Kerry, declared Snowden a traitor. At a cybersecurity summit in the fall, former NSA director Hayden joked about putting Snowden on the kill list. "I can help you with that," Rep. Mike Rogers, head of the House Intelligence Committee, offered in reply.

With these sorts of condemnations, offset by the blockbuster stories produced by Greenwald, Poitras and The Washington Post's Barton Gellman, who had also been introduced to Snowden through Poitras and received his own set of documents, Snowden began his journey through what one of his legal advisers, Jesselyn Radack, calls the "underground railroad" of whistle-blower advocates and sympathizers, a worldwide drama stage-managed by Julian Assange.

Shortly after Snowden left the Mira hotel for a safe house in Hong Kong, his lawyers received a call from Kristinn Hrafnsson, an Icelandic journalist and spokesman for WikiLeaks. Hrafnsson had heard that Snowden might want to seek asylum in Iceland. "It was natural for us to be received as an ally," Hrafnsson tells me. "He didn't have many at the moment." Soon afterward, a 31-year-old Brit named Sarah Harrison, a longtime associate of Julian Assange's, arrived in Hong Kong as WikiLeaks' eyes and ears, and Snowden's escort out of Hong Kong. She didn't leave Snowden's side for the next four months.

On June 24th, Assange, who has been living in exile at the Ecuadorean Embassy in London for more than a year, held a press conference and claimed responsibility for successfully shepherding Snowden out of Hong Kong to Russia, where, after 39 days in Moscow's Sheremetyevo International Airport - and filing 21 asylum applications to as many countries - he was granted temporary asylum by Vladimir Putin, for a year.

It was a huge moment for Assange, who, as one observer notes, "must have been going insane, watching all these leaks go to Glenn and Laura," neither of whom shared them with WikiLeaks, but instead published them in mainstream outlets like The Guardian. In a telephone interview, Assange accused The

Guardian, with whom he has had a very public feud since 2010, of "abandoning" Snowden in Hong Kong. This is a statement Assange, through WikiLeaks, has made numerous times on Twitter, though Greenwald, as well as Guardian staffers, insist it is a complete misrepresentation of fact. "Snowden was really clear that he didn't want to involve the reporters in his future plans - my understanding was that he didn't want them implicated in it," says one senior Guardian editor.

But WikiLeaks clung to its narrative. "We understood the situation," says Assange. "We worked through the diplomatic network, and we made sure Mr. Snowden's rights were protected. And as a consequence, we've demonstrated that WikiLeaks, as a media institution, has the resources, capacity and will that a lot of media organizations do not."

Snowden has been an undeniable boon for WikiLeaks, which has been struggling financially since 2011 (last year, it reportedly received just \$93,000 in donations, barely making a dent in its 2012 annual budget of \$530,000). After Snowden went public, donations to the group began to pour in at around \$1,300 per day. WikiLeaks now sells T-shirts, mugs and tote bags with Snowden's face on them (Bradley Manning's visage, which once adorned similar paraphernalia, has all but disappeared).

Greenwald has a complicated relationship with WikiLeaks and Assange, whom he considers an ally, though given Assange's controversial reputation in the United States, he admits that "Julian stepping forward and being the face of the story wasn't great for Snowden." But he credits Assange with having helped save Snowden from almost certain extradition to the U.S. Snowden, however, never wanted to go to Russia, which Assange acknowledges. "Snowden believed that in order to most effectively push for reform in the U.S., Latin America would be the better option," Assange tells me. "He did not want to invite a political attack that he'd 'defected.'"

Assange, however, disagrees. "While Venezuela and Ecuador could protect him in the short term, over the long term there could be a change in government. In Russia, he's safe, he's well-regarded, and that is not likely to change. That was my advice to Snowden, that he would be physically safest in Russia." Assange also claims that Snowden has proved "you can blow the whistle about national security and not only survive, but thrive."

But how much Snowden is thriving in Russia is unknown. According to his Russian lawyer, Anatoly Kucherena, he has been learning the language and reading Russian literature. (He recently finished Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment*.) Snowden also reportedly took a job not long ago at a Russian Internet company. Greenwald, who says he talks with Snowden regularly via encrypted chat, maintains that he knows very few details of Snowden's daily life. "For both his and my own protection, there are questions I stay away from," he says. Radack and Drake recently visited Snowden as part of a whistle-blower delegation; they were whisked to a secret meeting and dinner with him at a stately mansion in or near Moscow. That they were taken in a van with darkened windows, at night, meant they had no idea where they were going. Radack nevertheless insists that Snowden is not being controlled by the Russian intelligence service, the FSB, nor has he become a Russian spy. "Russia treats its spies much better than leaving them trapped in the Sheremetyevo transit zone for over a month," Radack recalled Snowden darkly joking to her.

Perhaps though, just because he's not a spy, says Andrei Soldatov, one of Russia's leading investigative journalists, doesn't mean he's free. "It is quite clear that Snowden is being protected by the FSB," says Soldatov, co-author of *The New Nobility: The Restoration of Russia's Security State and the Enduring Legacy of the KGB* (2010). What this means is that every facet of Snowden's communications, and his life, is likely being monitored, if invisibly, by the Russian security services. "The mansion where he met those whistle-blowers? Rented on behalf of the government. All of the safe houses, apartments and dachas where we've traditionally kept defectors are owned by the Russian security services. No one has been able to figure out where he works, if he actually has this job. The FSB would never let him do anything where they couldn't monitor his communications." Even if Snowden were to decide he wanted to go to the U.S. Embassy and turn himself in, "it would be difficult for him to find a completely uncontrolled way of communicating with the Americans," Soldatov says.

Soldatov believes that Snowden might underestimate how closely he's being watched, suggesting somewhat of a Truman Show-like existence. "To what degree has he been turned into a different person?" he says. "Snowden is not a trained intelligence agent. But those who are can tell you, if you live in a controlled environment, you cease to be truly independent-minded because everyone and everything around you is also controlled. It doesn't matter if you have your laptop."

As for Greenwald, he's become an international celebrity in the past six months, and I meet him while he is cresting a wave of fame unlike any he's ever known. Since Snowden, he's been interviewed by virtually every form of media known to humankind, broken huge stories in both the English-speaking and foreign media, and has won the Brazilian equivalent of the Pulitzer Prize (for a story he did with Brazil's Globo newspaper that exposed the scale of the NSA spying in the country).

In order to protect their material - and avoid serious legal entanglements - Greenwald and Poitras agreed that no one other than they would ever have access to the full set of documents (The Washington Post's Gellman has his own set). Instead, they've doled out information on a story-by-story basis, with their bylines always attached, to "keep media organizations on a leash," as Greenwald puts it. Though some critics maintain that Snowden, who carried four laptops with him to Hong Kong, must have shared the information with either the Russians or the Chinese, Snowden insists this isn't true. Not only did he not carry any documents with him to Russia - "it wouldn't serve the public interest," he's said - he can't even access the material any longer. "He has built these encryption cells, and made sure that he doesn't have the passwords to them - other people have the passwords," says Greenwald, who has also said the "insurance" archive will only be accessed if something happens to Snowden. Greenwald doesn't say who those "other people" are. U.S. officials have ominously referred to this archive, likely stored on a data cloud, as a "doomsday" cache.

In August, Greenwald's partner, David Miranda, was detained at London's Heathrow Airport over the Snowden matter. Miranda was on his way home to Rio after a week's vacation in Berlin, where he had visited Poitras, who'd given him some of the Snowden documents to bring back to Greenwald. As he was entering the transit lounge, he was stopped by British police. The authorities seized the materials, as well as Miranda's laptop, cellphone and other electronic devices, and demanded passwords for the encrypted electronics. They detained and interrogated him for nine hours, before finally allowing him to continue on to Brazil.

Greenwald, who'd asked Miranda to bring him the materials, was outraged. "It was a fucking attack on press freedom," he says. "Journalism is not a crime, and it's not terrorism. For every journalist not to be infuriated by this aggressive attack was insane."

Many were stunned by the harassment, but Greenwald's methods, and his unabashed denunciation of those who criticize them, have raised questions about his own agenda. "This is a carefully constructed narrative," says James Lewis of CSIS. "They've got documents pertaining to foreign spying against the U.S., but not a single one of those has been released. Instead, this is scripted to lead you to a certain outcome, that it's just the U.S. doing this. The fact that they haven't released these documents makes me very suspicious. They're spinning as much as the U.S. government is."

The question is whether Greenwald is considered a threat by the U.S. government. While he is certainly doing better than Snowden, Greenwald too, as Radack says, is "free but not free," living comfortably in Rio, but unsure when he will be able to come home. Though Attorney General Eric Holder recently said that "I'm not sure there is a basis for prosecution," Greenwald isn't reassured. He believes it unlikely that he'd be hauled off a plane and arrested at immigration - if only for the negative press that would cause - but there's no way to know. "They could indict you in secret and just seal it, but there's no way to ever make them tell you one way or the other if they intend to arrest you. So you could theoretically be in legal limbo forever."

This is the situation, at least for the moment, that Edward Snowden faces. His coordinating attorney, Ben Wizner of the ACLU, has put together a team that he says is hoping to facilitate some form of agreement

so Snowden can find asylum in a more open country, like Germany, and possibly "someday, when the climate is right," return to the U.S. without fear of prosecution. But that day has not yet come, Wizner admits. "It's not going to happen overnight," he says.

For now, Snowden is in Russia, living in an apartment or a house that so far, no one has been able to find; maybe employed, shielded from the public by the state-security apparatus and communicating through encrypted e-mail or chat with just a handful of people, none of whom know the full extent of his daily life. "He is much more than just a mere source to me," Greenwald says. "I consider him heroic and brave. I care about him and do not want to see him imprisoned - that would be a horrific travesty as well as a profound waste."

Snowden, Greenwald says, has become "a huge celebrity" in Russia, where people muse about his whereabouts, wondering about his next move. Russian paparazzi, frustrated in their attempts to find him, have taken to selling fake pictures of Snowden shopping at the supermarket. "He's like Elvis," Greenwald says. But he's still in Russia. "I think the U.S. actually wants him in Russia because that's what lets them demonize him." And demonizing him is important, he adds. "If a whistle-blower becomes a hero, people start thinking, 'Wow, the stuff he saw must have really been awful for him to go and risk his life and blow the whistle.' But if you get to say, 'He's crazy, he's unstable, he's a Russian spy,' it de-legitimizes the premise of the whole act, which is that he saw something so fundamentally wrong that his conscience demanded that he do it."

Right now, Greenwald, who says he remains "infected" by Snowden's heroism, is determined to work in his stead. His first step has been to take the remaining documents, which exceed 10,000 in number, and start a new media enterprise with Poitras and investigative journalist Jeremy Scahill, funded by a \$250 million investment from tech billionaire Pierre Omidyar, the founder of eBay - who came to Greenwald specifically because of the Snowden leaks. The venture - currently dubbed "NewCo" - will be dedicated to investigative journalism and will purposely seek conflict with the government. "So we'll do the journalism, and then be like, 'OK, government, come get us,'" Greenwald says, clearly delighted at the prospect.

How the venture will take shape is still unknown. Greenwald, who left The Guardian in October, says he plans to have bureaus in New York and Washington, as well as what may be his own bureau of one in Brazil. "I'm not going to allow myself to be exiled from my own country because I did journalism, but as long as there's a meaningful chance that I'd be arrested and prosecuted for my journalism, I can't gamble with it," he says. "And that, itself, is such a powerful indictment."