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(Another) Letter to Mr. Snowden



Jul 21, 2013 by [DORIAN DE WIND, Military Affairs Columnist](#)



A couple of weeks ago, Melissa Harris-Perry at MSNBC posted [a letter to Edward Snowden](#).

Some believe that the letter was a bit sarcastic.

Let me try a little different way.

Dear Mr. Snowden,

I am a retired U.S. Air Force officer who served his country loyally, honorably and hopefully meritoriously for 20 years.

From looking at your resume, I can see that you have also served your country: four months in the Army reserves and a few years as a security guard with the National Security Agency (NSA), then with the Central Intelligence Agency, finally working for private contractors at the National Security Agency, culminating your service to country with a short stint with the technology consulting firm Booz Allen Hamilton at a secure NSA facility in Hawaii.

At this point, I *should* thank you for your service...

During my military career I was entrusted with a lot of classified information, up to and including 'Top Secret,' but by no means equal to the level, amount and extent of classified information that was entrusted to you or to which you had access. Information that included some of the most highly classified and sensitive intelligence and national security data that exists, or — in your handler's own words — "...enough information to cause harm to the U.S. government in a single minute than any other person has ever had..." Information that — again according to your handler — would make your government get on its knees every day begging that nothing happens to you, because if something does happen to you, all the information will be revealed and it could be your country's worst nightmare.

During my military service, I encountered problems and issues and, just like you, I was at times "disillusioned." On the couple of occasions when I encountered problems that could not be resolved through the normal chain of command, I went to the local Inspector General (IG) representative, wrote letters to the highest military officials or contacted my Representative.

Don't get me wrong, I understand that the problems you have identified are several magnitudes more serious and consequential than any I ever had to deal with.

But, honestly, was there no one in these United States — a Congressman, a Senator, a judge, a journalist — who could have, would have, listened to you and provided you with protection, immunity, whistle-blower status?

Was it really necessary to travel to China, Russia and wherever next your "America-is-evil tour" will take you with several computers and thumb drives chock-full of the most sensitive and potentially damaging national security data? Material that informs our adversaries of your country's intelligence's tactics, techniques and procedures, while dropping tantalizing crumbs along the way.

Was it really honest to so unfavorably compare you own country's human rights and personal liberties records to those of countries such as China, Russia, Venezuela, Cuba or Ecuador?

Will it be really worth it to throw yourself at the mercy, control and exploitation of and by countries that only have the worst interests in mind for your own country?

In other words, do the ends — cleaning up the NSA surveillance mess — truly justify the means you have chosen?

Yes, you have started a much-needed, legitimate debate and hopefully much good will come out of it. Already, because of you, [legislation requiring warrants](#) for e-mail searches is nearing a Senate vote

But — and I am asking this very earnestly — could you not have done this any other way, without breaking your sacred trust, without defiling your country, without damaging your country's national security, without helping the enemies of your country?

Ed, you could still come home and face the consequences, as we all eventually must. You may find that, with the

tremendous political and public support you have engendered because of the surveillance excesses that you have exposed, the U.S. justice system is not that bad after all. Certainly much, much better than the system of the country you are contemplating spending the rest of your life in.

Consider that if you make Russia your home-away-from-home, there will come the day when you will see enormous human rights and personal liberties abuses in your adopted country. I know you will want to expose them and correct them. When you do so, keep in mind names such as Magnitsky, Razvozhayev, Khodorkovsky, Sakharov, Estemirova, Klebnikov and others — many others.

You may also want to investigate and perhaps even complain about Mr. Putin's anti-gay legislation, but — again — be careful. Just a few weeks ago the Kremlin [detained dozens of gay and lesbian people](#) who were protesting the legislation.

Mr. Snowden, please think about it and please do the right thing. You still can, and perhaps the day may still come when we will be able to “thank you for your service” in more ways than one.

Dorian de Wind

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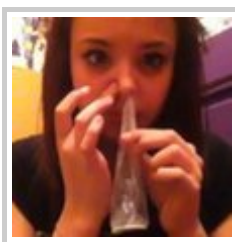
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