

## Bigger threat: Edward Snowden or NSA?

By Dean Obeidallah, Special to CNN

updated 8:44 AM EDT, Sat June 15, 2013

CNN.com

### Bigger threat: Edward Snowden or NSA?

#### Could the NSA leaker defect to China?

**Editor's note:** Dean Obeidallah, a former attorney, is a political comedian and frequent commentator on various TV networks including CNN. He is the editor of the politics blog *The Dean's Report* and co-host of a new CNN podcast "The Big Three" that looks at the top three stories of the week. Follow him on Twitter @deanofcomedy.

**(CNN)** -- What do you think of Edward Snowden? By leaking classified documents to the media and revealing that the National Security Agency has been monitoring our phone and Internet usage, is he a traitor or a hero? Could he simply be a narcissist looking to get famous? Or do you not care about either him or the NSA surveillance programs?

Chris Cuomo, co-host of the new CNN morning show, "New Day," joined us to discuss the top issues in this week's episode of "The Big Three" podcast. (Be sure to tune in to "New Day," which premieres on Monday June 17 at 6 a.m. ET.)

I must note that while I disagreed with Cuomo's view on Snowden, as a fellow graduate of Fordham Law School, his logic and comedy chops were impeccable. It's something we share and that distinguishes me from my co-hosts Margaret Hoover and John Avlon. (At least that's what I keep telling myself.)

Back to Edward Snowden. A poll this week found that 31% of Americans consider him a patriot while 23% view him as a traitor. But a whopping 46% say they don't know. Is it because these 46% simply aren't following the story or because they have accepted government surveillance as the price for security?

The Snowden Index: A glance at opinions about the NSA leaker

As Cuomo pointed out, Americans have "matured" since 9/11 over the issue of government surveillance. Consequently, he believes that many do accept increased monitoring if it means that we can prevent another 9/11 or Boston Marathon bombing.

But to me, "we the people" have a right to know when our government is spying on us, especially when officials like James Clapper, the director of National Intelligence, denied such a program existed when asked about it under oath by Congress just a few months ago. How else can we hold our government accountable if we aren't informed of its actions?

To listen to this week's podcast, click on the Soundcloud audio player on this page or find us on iTunes.

The second issue we discuss this week will hopefully outrage and disgust you as much as it did us. There are few things that unite the left and right in America (or Margaret, John and I for that matter) but charities taking advantage of the sympathy and good will of Americans did just that.

CNN teamed up with The Tampa Bay Times to reveal the 50 worst charities in America. Anyone considering donating money to a charity needs to first check out this list.

These charities have raised millions of dollars pulling on the heartstrings of Americans by claiming to help children dying of cancer, disabled veterans, the less fortunate and others in need. What are they really doing? Only giving pennies on the dollar to those they purport to assist while keeping 80% to 90% of the money raised for administrative costs -- such as paying their officers.

We also highlighted some of the best charities in America, including the YMCA, Goodwill and the new "Dean Obeidallah charity," where I pledge to use 100% of the money raised to help me, Dean Obeidallah.

Finally, we turned to erotic books and the CIA. No, the CIA hasn't started secretly spying on people who read erotica or investigating whether the "Letters to Penthouse" are real. As the Daily Beast reported, the CIA's new No. 2 person, Avril Danica Haines, once co-owned a bookstore where she featured "Erotica nights" during which she and her guests would read aloud racy portions of books.

John and Margaret applauded this as showing a human side to Haines as well as making the point that women in power can also be sexual beings. However, my view is that this type of story typifies why it's so difficult for women to navigate up the government and corporate ladder.

Those are our views. More importantly, we would love to hear your views on the three issues featured in this week's episode of "The Big Three." Plus, follow us on Twitter, we are all needy -- me especially.

*Follow us on*

*Join us on*

The opinions expressed in this commentary are solely those of Dean Obeidallah.

ADVERTISEMENT  
ADVERTIS

---

© 2013 Cable News Network. Turner Broadcasting System, Inc. All Rights Reserved.