

All.Net Analyst Report and Newsletter

Welcome to our Analyst Report and Newsletter

Send me the Snowden docs

After having had clearances and done some amount of work either directly or indirectly for the US government (among many others) since the 1980s, I finally finished the last of the set of contracts requiring clearances, and am now no longer holding such a clearance (as far as I am aware). And we all know what that means...

I am no longer prohibited!

As I mentioned in another one of these articles some months or years ago, people with US government clearances are not permitted to read the Snowden or Manning or other disclosures unless they have need to know for a specific government function, because this would be a technical violation of the security policies associated with being cleared. While I am still obligated to not disclose anything classified (I don't actually know anything classified that I or anyone else would want to know that isn't published unclassified and readily findable on the Internet), I am no longer obligated to not read things that may have been classified and were publicly disclosed.

As I was sitting chatting with my wife this morning, it hit me. I can now find out the actual details underlying the Snowden and Manning issued by reading the released documents! All the rest of you already know the details of course, and I have read the press accounts, but as a researcher, I always want to get to the original source and see the actual facts.

Where do I find it?

I know that the government has been systematically trying to prevent the classified information from these leaks from being available in the open, and it is their job to do so. Even though any nation states or their surrogates already have copies of these documents (or if they don't, they are not very good at being nation states or surrogates), the real enemy of governments spying on their own people is the people they are spying on. Again, to be clear, a major and very worthy and important job of the US government security folks responsible for protection of classified documents is to prevent their being disclosed to unauthorized parties, including me. That's their job. But as a citizen wishing to act responsibly, it is my duty to find out what my government is doing so I can be an informed citizen. So my question to you is "Where can I find these documents so I can read them?"

I am looking right now and don't see them...

So I did a search for "classified snowden documents" using google and within 4 clicks I found <https://www.eff.org/nsa-spying/nsadocs> which I will look at in detail later... However, en route to there, I encountered an article supposedly pointing to the entire collection. Fortunately, my browser was too slow and the big black box that covered up that part of the Web site showed up after I found the link. Yes, that's right, the defense against my finding the link was a big black box overlaid on top of the content of the Web page after the content loaded. I did a reload, and after clicking on the link to the EFF site, used the back button, and the big black box was gone.

Forget you!

OK, the title here is a bit over the top – but that's what sells these free articles!

It turns out, as others have long pointed out, that it's not so easy to remove something from the Internet. And this brings me to the right to be forgotten. I personally wish I had the capacity to forget some things, but for some reason, they come back up from the dark corners of my brain, especially when I think about forgetting them.

Suppose you are the EU and you think your citizens have the right to be forgotten. How exactly do you get this done? Given that XXXXX apparently does sniff it all, YYYYYYY and ZZZZZZZZ apparently know it all, AAAAAAA/AAAAAA apparently collect it all, BBB and CCC apparently process it all, DDDDDDDDDDDDD apparently exploits it all, and something else apparently partners it all [reference not included for obvious reasons – just because I am allowed to look at it now doesn't mean I would or should disclose it to others], how can you ever expect any of this to be forgotten?

Who's doing this to what?

Of course the names of the companies spying on US citizens for the US government would be unseemly and likely highly classified. But how many major telecommunications providers are there in the World? Perhaps 80 or so? I bet if you name one it will be on the list. So name any of the ones you know of, and they are likely or were likely working with the US government to help achieve these goals. And that includes, as we all know from news stories, planting Trojan horses and collection capabilities in telecommunications systems, infrastructures, hardware systems of all sorts, operating systems of all sorts, application software of all sorts, security systems of all sorts, and gaining assistance from the systems integrators that deploy these things.

What are they doing?

You name it, they will try it or have tried it. I created a list of attack methods in the late 1990s and put it online at <http://all.net/> as part of our comprehensive database of such methods. I think there are 94 classes of attack methods or something like that. If you go down that list, you can reasonably assume they have done all of those things in many different ways.

What is the effect?

I just did the updates on my computers and phones in the last few days, as did my wife. Mostly they don't do what they used to do as well as they used to do it (or not at all), and they seem to use more power and more bandwidth more quickly. They are the same hardware, so I guess that just means that the Trojans for surveillance make the systems slower and less reliable, and of course they have to reduce other functionality, like keeping the contacts list properly, either by accident or to allow enough space to store data collections till offloading.

Summary:

Don't actually send me the Snowden documents. You don't have to. They are easy to find online, they don't tell us anything new about what can be done, but they do tell us what was and presumably is being done. Which is that the US and many other governments are spying on us. Which is not exactly new either! The real question is why they keep all this stuff secret. And I think I know the answer. It's not because it's unseemly, politically problematic, illegal, technically advanced, hard to figure out, or any of those sorts of things. The real secret is that