

# Edward Snowden, Russian citizen

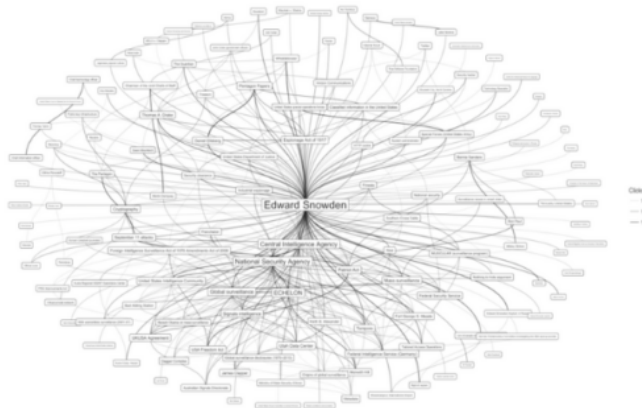
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 [cnav.news/2022/09/27/news/world-news/edward-snowden-russian-citizen/](https://cnav.news/2022/09/27/news/world-news/edward-snowden-russian-citizen/)

By Terry A. Hurlbut

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## Edward Snowden



## Russian citizen

Yesterday Vladimir Putin, President of the Russian Federation, issued a “decree” (equivalent to an executive order) reopening a nine-year-old debate. Edward Snowden, former contractor for the NSA and Booz Allen Hamilton, is now a citizen of Russia. Few news organs want to look back very far into what Edward Snowden did (and whom he embarrassed). Even today they mostly want to talk about whether the Russian Army will mobilize and deploy him to eastern Ukraine. But the real significance of Putin’s action lies in what Snowden knows, and how Putin can use that today.

### Edward Snowden – who is he?

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Current reportage on Edward Snowden comes from the Associated Press (through GVWire) and Axios. But nine years ago, *CNAV* covered his case extensively. *CNAV* considered him an unlikely hero for his exposure of NSA “writs of assistance” for telephone company metadata. Contributor Dwight Kehoe asked whether Snowden was “devil or angel,” because Snowden informed foreign powers about telco metadata surveillance techniques. *CNAV* pointed out that while conservatives had an internal debate about Snowden, liberals turned on him for exposing the secrets of *their* programs, and *their* contempt for the “little people” whose interests they *pretend* to uphold.

Then in December of 2013 came the temporary injunction against the NSA's worldwide telephone surveillance program. That one act vindicated Edward Snowden as nothing else could have. Said Judge Richard J. Leon:

I cannot imagine a more “indiscriminate” and “arbitrary” invasion than this systematic and high-tech collection and retention of personal data on virtually every single citizen for purposes of querying and analyzing it without prior judicial approval. Surely, such a program infringes on ‘that degree of privacy’ that the founders enshrined in the Fourth Amendment.

The judge was right. The Fourth Amendment demands that warrants *particularly* describe places of search and subjects or objects of search or seizure. The NSA telco metadata search program violated that precept.

Sadly, that case (*Klayman v. Obama*, Docket No. 13-931) ended in “vacation” of the injunction by the D.C. Court of Appeals. In 2014 the Supreme Court denied review of that decision.

## What has he been doing since then?

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Edward Snowden, of course, considered that Judge Leon had vindicated him. But when the D.C. Court of Appeals vacated the judgment, he came close to losing heart. Having made it to Russia, he has never left it.

In 2016 (after the Election), Congress issued its “bipartisan” report condemning Snowden for making

the largest and most damaging public release of classified information in U.S. intelligence history.

*Russia Today* carried Snowden’s rebuttal to that report, which he also shared on Twitter:

Unsurprising that HPSCI's report is riddled with obvious falsehoods. The only surprise is how accidentally exonerating it is. 1/x

— Edward Snowden (@Snowden) December 22, 2016

After three years of investigation and millions of dollars, they can present no evidence of harmful intent, foreign influence, or harm. Wow.

— Edward Snowden (@Snowden) December 22, 2016

An indicator of HPSCI's slant is the knowing omission of my strident, well-documented criticisms of Russian policy: <https://t.co/rbAUeGZPd7>

— Edward Snowden (@Snowden) [December 22, 2016](#)

Despite this, they claim without evidence I'm in cahoots with Russian intel. Everyone knows this is false, but let's examine their basis:

— Edward Snowden (@Snowden) [December 22, 2016](#)

Claim: I went to a hacker conference, met Chinese hackers, then told people at NSA how great China is (seriously?). False and insane.

— Edward Snowden (@Snowden) [December 22, 2016](#)

I could go on forever. It is an endless parade of falsity so unbelievable it comes across as parody. Yet unintentionally exonerating:

— Edward Snowden (@Snowden) [December 22, 2016](#)

Final note: HPSCI's report admits I purged and abandoned hard drives rather than risk bringing them through Russia. Glad it's settled.

— Edward Snowden (@Snowden) [December 22, 2016](#)

In this extensive Twitter thread, Snowden denied ever having visited Mainland China, or shared anything with Chinese intelligence. He also denied collaborating with Russian intelligence and pointed out his own criticisms of Russian government policy at the time. (See for instance [this article](#) by Leonid Bershidsky in Bloomberg, which came out in September 2016.) Finally he said the report “unintentionally” exonerated him, in that it found

| no evidence of harmful intent, foreign influence, or harm.

Beyond that, he “kept a low profile” while living in Russia. In 2019 he wrote a memoir, *Permanent Record*, about his deeds. He also said he *might* return to America *if* he could be sure of a fair trial.

Evidently he felt no such assurance, for in 2020 Russia granted him permanent residency. President Trump [seriously considered](#) pardoning Snowden in August 2020, according to *Axios*. Trump took flak from both parties for that statement.

## What happens now?

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Technically Edward Snowden, in accepting the benefits of Russian citizenship, must accept one possible burden. Russian law now considers him a military reservist, as it does all adult male citizens 65 years old or younger. This applies even to dual citizens. (Edward Snowden

has not renounced his American citizenship.)

Ned Price, spokesman for the U.S. State Department, said:

Our position has not changed. Mr. Snowden should return to the United States where he should face justice as any other American citizen would. Perhaps the only thing that has changed is that, as a result of his Russian citizenship, apparently now he may well be conscripted to fight in Russia's war in Ukraine.

Not likely – because he has never served in the Russian armed forces. That alone puts him far down the list of candidates for mobilization. Furthermore, Edward Snowden would not have Russian citizenship *anyway*, had he not made concrete contributions to the Russian Federation. These likely do not take the form of actionable intelligence (which would be obsolete anyway), but rather in the form of his cybernetic and systems-analytical expertise.

One thing *has* changed that Mr. Price would probably rather not discuss. Edward Snowden becomes once again an embarrassment to the current occupant of the White House. Recall that, when Snowden made his big splash, Joe Biden served as Vice-President. More to the point, the surveillance and harassment of American citizens in America, for specious or flat-out invalid reasons, concerns Americans as never before. Edward Snowden revealed that.