Beat: News

Terrorists;changing methods; after NSA revelations, Pentagon says

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USPA News - The revelations on the U.S. government`s spying techniques by American whistle-blower Edward Snowden has prompted terrorists to change their methods and may endanger the lives of American troops overseas, two U.S. lawmakers said on Thursday. A classified report by the Pentagon on the theft of classified information by Snowden concluded that the former National Security Agency (NSA) contractor downloaded approximately 1.7 million intelligence files, representing the single largest theft of secrets in the history of the United States.

The report found that a majority of the documents relate to current U.S. military operations, and publication of this information could endanger American troops in combat and potentially cause operations to fail. It also claimed the disclosures on spying techniques so far has already "tipped off our adversaries to the sources and methods of our defense" and hurt U.S. allies. "This report confirms my greatest fears - Snowden`s real acts of betrayal place America`s military men and women at greater risk. Snowden`s actions are likely to have lethal consequences for our troops in the field," said House Intelligence Committee Chairman Mike Rogers after reviewing the report, which said the disclosures could "gravely impact" U.S. national security. Rogers further rejected comments by Snowden that he is only defending civil liberties, noting that most of the documents concern military operations. "Snowden handed over great insight to our adversaries, endangering each and every American," he said. "Make no mistake, Snowden is no patriot and there is no way to excuse the irreparable harm he caused to America and her allies, and continues to cause." Congressman C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger, a ranking member of the House Intelligence Committee, echoed Rogers` remarks. "Snowden handed terrorists a copy of our country`s playbook and now we are paying the price, which this report confirms. His actions aligned him with our enemy," he said. "We have begun to see terrorists changing their methods because of the leaks and this report indicates that the harm to our country and its citizens will only continue to endure." The New York Times and the Guardian, two of the newspapers that Snowden has worked with to reveal his information, called on the U.S. government last week to grant Snowden clemency for his revelations about the extent of the U.S. government`s surveillance on phone and internet communications. "Considering the enormous value of the information he has revealed, and the abuses he has exposed, Mr. Snowden deserves better than a life of permanent exile, fear and flight," the New York Times wrote in an editorial. "He may have committed a crime to do so, but he has done his country a great service." U.S. federal prosecutors have charged Snowden with espionage and felony theft of government property for leaking classified information, which has brought renewed diplomatic headaches for the U.S. government. Britain`s Guardian newspaper also urged Washington to allow Snowden to return to the U.S. "with dignity." "Mr Snowden gave classified information to journalists, even though he knew the likely consequences. That was an act of some moral courage," The Guardian wrote. "We hope that calm heads within the present administration are working on a strategy to allow Mr Snowden to return to the US with dignity, and the president to use his executive powers to treat him humanely and in a manner that would be a shining example about the value of whistleblowers and of free speech itself." The National Security Council declined to comment on the editorials but U.S. officials have repeatedly insisted they intent to prosecute Snowden. In his first television interview broadcast on Christmas day, as part of British Channel 4`s "Alternative Christmas Message," Snowden compared the U.S. government`s spying techniques to George Orwell`s book "1984," in which Orwell describes a totalitarian society where everyone is under complete surveillance by authorities. "Recently, we learned that our governments, working in concert, have created a system of worldwide mass surveillance, watching everything we do," Snowden said in the television broadcast. He went on to say that what Orwell had imagined is "nothing compared" to what is available today. "We have sensors in our pockets that track us everywhere we go. Think about what this means for the privacy of the average person," the whistleblower said. "A child born today will grow up with no conception of privacy at all. They`ll never know what it means to have a private moment to themselves - an unrecorded, unanalyzed thought." "The conversation occurring today will determine the amount of trust we can place both in the technology that surrounds us and the government that regulates it," he added. "Together, we can find a better balance, end mass surveillance, and remind the government that if it really wants to know how we feel, asking is always cheaper than spying." Snowden`s message came just days after he declared his own mission accomplished. "For me, in terms of personal satisfaction, the mission`s already accomplished," he told the Washington Post. "I already won. As soon as the journalists were able to work, everything that I had been trying to do was validated. Because, remember, I didn`t want to change society. I wanted to give society a chance to determine if it should change itself." Before being granted political asylum in Russia, Snowden had been stuck inside the transit zone at a Moscow airport for five weeks after fleeing Hong Kong when the U.S. charged him with three felony counts, including violations of the U.S. Espionage Act.

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