

# counterpunch

## The Intercept, Mass Surveillance, and the State

Omidyar's Paper Turns a Blind Eye to the American Deep State

Bill Blunden, March 10, 2015.

*"L'État, c'est moi"* —Louis XIV

Like a proud father CIA director John Brennan has announced that he's creating a [new directorate](#) to conduct cyberespionage. Never mind all those classified documents published recently by the *Intercept* which [prove](#) that the CIA has been active in the cyber domain for years. While it goes without saying that the CIA's [subversion campaign](#) is unsettling what's equally thought-provoking is the manner in which the *Intercept* frames the involvement of the private sector.

Every year the CIA showcases its latest batch of subversion tools, taking them for a victory lap at a secret conference which internal documents refer to glibly as a "Jamboree." In 2012 the Jamboree was hosted by Lockheed Martin at a campus in northern Virginia. Journalists at the *Intercept* describe Lockheed as follows:

*"Lockheed is one of the largest defense contractors in the world; its tentacles stretch into every aspect of U.S. national security and intelligence. The company is akin to a privatized wing of the U.S. national security state — more than 80 percent of its total revenue comes from the U.S. government."*

Note how this description subtly creates the impression that the ultimate culprit with regard to mass surveillance is the government. Lockheed is merely a "wing" of an overarching "national security state". All roads lead to U.S. intelligence, it's all about the state.

Yet close examination of the [history of the CIA](#) yields a different picture. Contractors like Lockheed Martin aren't a subordinate extension of the national security state. Quite the opposite. It's probably more accurate to conclude that intelligence agencies, like the [NSA](#), represent a public sector [appendage](#) of a much larger corporate power structure whose nexus resides in profound [sources of wealth and influence](#) outside of the government. A [Deep State](#), if you will, that's fundamentally driving what goes on in Washington.

In the absence of mass public outcry private capital sets the rules. It's been this way since Ferdinand Lundberg wrote *America's Sixty Families* back in 1937. Or perhaps Mr. Scahill hasn't glimpsed politicians on [both sides](#) of the aisle trotting out in front of billionaires to audition for public office?

Hence there is a recurring theme in L'affaire Snowden that arises from the *Intercept's* coverage of mass surveillance. Focus is maintained almost exclusively on the government without acknowledging the central role that corporations play. According to the *Intercept's* worldview hi-tech companies are but helpless pawns being coerced and assailed by runaway security services rather than [willing accomplices](#) that directly [benefit](#) from the global panopticon.

Honestly, doesn't Ed Snowden have more information on Booz Allen?

When a doctor is faced with a serious medical condition the diagnosis typically informs the subsequent course of treatment. So it is with mass surveillance. Only in the case of mass surveillance the diagnosis is being shaped by certain actors to fit a preconceived solution. The agenda of the far right is clear. Nothing short of corporate [feudalism](#). Libertarian political operator Grover Norquist boldly [spelled it out](#): "I don't want to abolish government. I simply want to reduce it to the size where I can drag it into the bathroom and drown it in the bathtub."

A messaging scheme which depicts the government as the chief villain is a godsend for people who are itching for reasons to demolish the state. Techno libertarians rejoice and present the public with their version of salvation. "Crypto everywhere" [roar](#) CEOs across Silicon Valley. How predictably shallow and self-serving. Their counter-surveillance talking points provide them with something new to sell us. It also absolves them of responsibility while redirecting the public's attention away from more far-reaching systemic measures.

In light of this it's hard not to notice the various twists of fate in L'affaire Snowden. Classified documents gradually trickled into the public record thanks to a whistle-blower who [donated](#) money to Ron Paul and exhibited some decidedly [right-wing inclinations](#) online. A copy of the classified documents were provided to a journalist who wrote a [policy whitepaper](#) for the CATO Institute (formerly known as the [Charles Koch](#) Foundation). Then out of the woodwork appears a [kindly libertarian billionaire](#) who [dazzles](#) the said journalist with fame and fortune, "a dream opportunity that was impossible to decline."

The product of coincidence? To an extent. But what's undeniable is that a member of the financial elite, a man who has clocked over a dozen [visits](#) to the Obama White House, deliberately leveraged his assets to inject himself into the unfolding course of events. Once more the narrative about mass surveillance that his news organization conveys tends to cast corporations as champions against mass surveillance while omitting to acknowledge how they stand to benefit from the global panopticon. It appears that elements within the ruling class would have us believe that the Deep State will solve the very problem that it [intentionally](#) created.

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