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As Director of National Intelligence James Clapper warns the recent leaks could "render great damage to our intelligence capabilities," we speak to William Binney, a former top official at the National Security Agency, and Glenn Greenwald, the Guardian journalist who has broken the NSA spying stories. Binney spent almost 40 years at the agency but resigned after Sept. 11 over concerns about growing domestic surveillance. He spent time as director of the NSA's World Geopolitical and Military Analysis Reporting Group and was a senior NSA crypto-mathematician largely responsible for automating the agency's worldwide eavesdropping network. "The government is not trying to protect [secrets about NSA surveillance] from the terrorists," Binney says. "It's trying to protect knowledge of that program from the citizens of the United States."

[Watch Part 2 of Interview with William Binney](#)

TRANSCRIPT

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AMY GOODMAN: As we continue our coverage of the National Security Agency, we are speaking to Glenn Greenwald, who has been releasing this remarkable series of exposés based on Edward Snowden getting these documents from the National Security Agency. We're joined now by former senior NSA official William Binney, as well, who was a senior NSA crypto-mathematician, largely responsible for automating the agency's worldwide eavesdropping network, one of the two co-founders of the agency's Signals Intelligence Automation Research Center, resigned after the September 11th attacks, deeply concerned about the level of surveillance. Glenn Greenwald, again, still with us, who has broken the series.

Glenn, before we go to William Binney, can you talk about the latest revelation about the cyber-attacks that was your most recent exposé?

GLENN GREENWALD: Sure. I mean, I—you know, we read this document, and it was somewhat remarkable because it set forth this very aggressive policy whereby the United States could wage what the document itself called "offensive cyberwarfare" against any other entity or any other nation in the world simply in the event that it advances U.S. interests—not if we're being attacked, not if it was necessary to prevent an imminent attack, but simply if, in the judgment of the president or various members of his Cabinet, including the Defense Department, it was in the judgment of them that doing so would advance national interests, they had the right to wage cyberwarfare. And the Pentagon had declared cyberwarfare as an act of war, which is a really aggressive war doctrine that the president codified. It also talked about cyber-operations used domestically inside of the United States. There were no planning details, no blueprints for how these attacks would be waged. There was nothing harmful about publishing it. But it was an extraordinary policy that had been secretly adopted by the president with no debate. And we believe debate was warranted, and we therefore published it.

AMY GOODMAN: There is a great irony in Snowden revealing his identity from Hong Kong, President Obama at the time wrapping up a two-day summit with Chinese President Xi Jinping in California. The outgoing national security adviser, Tom Donilon, said Obama confronted Xi on U.S. allegations of China-based cyberpiracy, Glenn.

GLENN GREENWALD: Right. Well, that was one of the main reasons why we published the article is because the Obama administration has spent three years now running around the world warning about the dangers of cyber-attacks and cyberwarfare coming from other nations like China, like Iran, like other places, and what is unbelievably clear is that it is the United States itself that is far and away the most prolific and the most aggressive perpetrator of exactly those cyber-attacks that President Obama claims to find so alarming. And as you say, we published the story on the eve of his conference with the president of China, in which the top agenda item, because of the United States' insistence, was their complaints about Chinese cyber-attacks and hacking. And it just shows the rancid, fundamental hypocrisy of the statements the United States makes, not just to the world, but to its own people about these crucial matters.

AMY GOODMAN: I want to bring William Binney into the conversation, as well. William Binney, you quit after almost 40 years at the NSA, deeply involved in developing the

whole surveillance mechanism, and yet you quit over it, as well. Your response to these series of revelations?

WILLIAM BINNEY: Well, it's certainly an extension of what I've been trying to say, that we were on a slippery slope to a totalitarian state. And that was simply based on the idea that the government was collecting so much information about all the citizens inside the country, that it gave them so much power. They could target people in the—for example, use it, use the knowledge to collectively assemble all of the people participating in the tea party, target them, and do—they could even do active attack on them with, going across the network, taking material out of their computers. So it was a very dangerous situation, in my mind. And still is.

AMY GOODMAN: William Binney, when you quit over a decade ago, would you ever think it would get to this point, or were we at this point a decade ago, as well?

WILLIAM BINNEY: Actually, it started about then. I mean, certainly 2003 was important because of all of the Narus devices they were putting and other equipment that would allow them to take whatever was on the optical fiber network inside the United States. They deployed those and started collecting all that material, so that became—that was content coming in. Emails, voice over IP, all of that kind of material was coming in and being stored. And then, before that, starting right after 9/11, they started pulling in all of the call records, which, by the way, some of the numbers everybody is talking about are pretty low. They're just too low. The call records that I estimated would have been on the order of three billion a day.

Now, it doesn't mean that they're transcribing what's being said on the phone calls; they're just recording the fact that they occurred. They're using a target list, I'm sure, to target people who are—who they want to record and transcribe. And that list is provided to the switch networks, and whenever the switches detect them, they route those audios—that audio to recorders, and then it gets recorded, stored and put in a priority list. Then the transcribers go through that and transcribe it.

AMY GOODMAN: I want to return to remarks made over the weekend by Director of National Intelligence James Clapper. In an interview with [NBC](#), he said the leaks would aid enemies of the United States.

JAMES CLAPPER: While we're having this debate, discussion and all this media explosion, which of course supports transparency, which is a great thing in this country, but that same transparency has a double-edged sword, in that our adversaries, whether nation state adversaries or nefarious groups, benefit from that same transparency. So, as we speak, they are going to school and learning how we do this. And so, that's why it potentially has—can render great damage to our intelligence capabilities.

AMY GOODMAN: William Binney, can you respond to the director of national intelligence, James Clapper? And then I want to ask Glenn to do the same.

WILLIAM BINNEY: Sure. In my mind, that's a red herring. I mean, it's just a false issue. The point was, the terrorists have already known that we've been doing this for years, so there's no surprise there. They're not going to change the way they operate just because it comes out in the U.S. press. I mean, the point is, they already knew it, and they were operating the way they would operate anyway. So, the point is that they're—we're not—the government here is not trying to protect it from the terrorists; it's trying to protect it, that knowledge of that program, from the citizens of the United States. That's where I see it.

AMY GOODMAN: And, Glenn Greenwald, I mean, this, of course, is the debate that's going on in all of the networks right now, is that you're compromising national security by publishing what Edward Snowden has given to you, and of course that Edward Snowden is not a whistleblower, but a threat to national security, they are saying. If you could also comment, Glenn, after you respond to that, on the fact that Edward Snowden did not want everything released that he had access to, that he was careful, for example, not to release the location of CIA stations and other information?

GLENN GREENWALD: The claim that the director is making is so ludicrous that I'm surprised he can get it out with a straight face. It really ought to insult the—it does insult the intelligence of every single person to whom he's directing it. The idea that there are any terrorists in the world who pose any real threat who aren't aware or who weren't aware until our articles appeared last week that the United States government tries to monitor their communications and listen in on their telephone calls and read their emails, any terrorist who is unaware of the fact that the U.S. government was doing that is a terrorist who is incapable of even writing their own name, let alone detonating a bomb inside the United States. Exactly as Mr. Binney said, their only concern is—this has nothing to do with terrorism. They're not trying to keep any of this from the terrorists; they're trying to keep it from the American people. And that's the point.

And as far as the documents are concerned, he had access to enormous sums of top-secret documents that would be incredibly harmful. He went through and turned over only a small portion of those documents to us, all of which he read very carefully. And I know that not only because he told me that, but also because the way we got the documents was in extremely detailed folders all divided by content, that you could have only organized them had you carefully read them. And when he gave them to us, he said, "Look, I'm not a journalist. I'm not a high-level government official. I am not saying that everything I gave you should be published. I don't want it all to be published. I want you, as journalists, to go through it and decide what is in the public interest and what will not cause a lot of harm." He invited—in fact, urged—us to exercise exactly the kind of journalistic judgment that we have exercised. And so, had it been his intention to harm the United States, he could have just uploaded all these documents to the Internet or found the most damaging ones and caused them to be published. He did the opposite. The NSA and the rest of the country owe him a huge debt of gratitude for all of the work he has done to inform the American public without bringing about any harm to them.

AMY GOODMAN: To say the least, he understands the stakes right now. I mean, this is the first week of the Bradley Manning trial, who faces life in prison, possibly death, for releasing documents to WikiLeaks, on trial at Fort Meade—actually, the headquarters of NSA

. Glenn Greenwald and William Binney, if you could give a final comment on this?

WILLIAM BINNEY: Who should go first?

AMY GOODMAN: Go ahead, Bill Binney.

GLENN GREENWALD: Well, this is why I find it so incredibly courageous—

AMY GOODMAN: No, Glenn.

GLENN GREENWALD: —to watch what he did, because he knows—sorry, because he knows exactly how the government treats whistleblowers, and yet he went forward and did it anyway. And what I really hope is that his courage is contagious, that people get inspired by his example, as I have been, and decide that they ought to demand that their rights not be abridged and that they have the full authority to stand up to the United States government without being

afraid.

AMY GOODMAN: Will there be more exposés, Glenn Greenwald, that we can expect from you at *The Guardian*?

GLENN GREENWALD: Yes, there will definitely be more exposés that you can expect from me in *The Guardian*.

AMY GOODMAN: And, Bill Binney, very quickly, 10 seconds.

WILLIAM BINNEY: Well, I'm sure—I mean, it was a conscious decision that he made to do what he did, and of course the government is going to try to get him, and he knew that. So, he's—he is doing his—

AMY GOODMAN: I want to thank you both for being with us—

WILLIAM BINNEY: Yeah.

AMY GOODMAN: —Bill Binney and Glenn Greenwald.