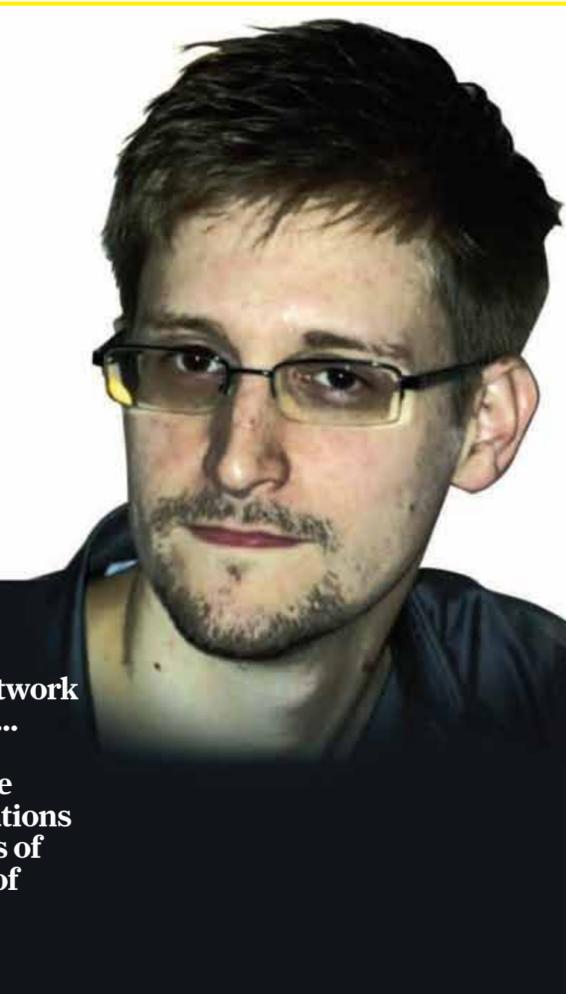


EXCLUSIVE Whistle-blower Edward Snowden talks to the SCMP and reveals how ...

U.S. SPY NET TARGETS HK



My intention is to ask the courts and people of Hong Kong to decide my fate. I have been given no reason to doubt your system

The United States Government will do anything to prevent me from getting this into the public eye

I will never feel safe

Unfortunately, the United States Government is now bullying the Hong Kong Government to prevent me from continuing my work

We hack network backbones ... that give us access to the communications of hundreds of thousands of computers

In a sensational interview, the ex-CIA operative says the US government has been hacking computers in Hong Kong and on the mainland for years, as he vows to fight likely attempts by Washington to extradite him

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US whistle-blower Edward Snowden yesterday emerged from hiding in Hong Kong and revealed to the *South China Morning Post* that he will stay in the city to fight likely attempts by his government to have him extradited for leaking state secrets.

In an exclusive interview carried out from a secret location in the city, the former Central Intelligence Agency analyst also made explosive claims that the US government had been hacking into computers in Hong Kong and on the mainland for years.

At Snowden's request we cannot divulge details about how the interview was conducted.

A week since revelations that the US has been secretly collect-

ing phone and online data of its citizens, he said he will stay in the city "until I am asked to leave", adding: "I have had many opportunities to flee HK, but I would rather stay and fight the US government in the courts, because I have faith in HK's rule of law."

In a frank hour-long interview, the 29-year-old, who US authorities have confirmed is now the subject of a criminal case, said he was neither a hero nor a traitor and that:

- US National Security Agency's controversial Prism programme extends to people and institutions in Hong Kong and mainland China;
- The US is exerting "bullying" diplomatic pressure on Hong Kong to extradite him;
- Hong Kong's rule of law will protect him from the US;
- He is in constant fear for his

own safety and that of his family. Snowden has been in Hong Kong since May 20 when he fled his home in Hawaii to take refuge here, a move which has been questioned by many who believe the city cannot protect him.

"People who think I made a mistake in picking HK as a location misunderstand my intentions. I am not here to hide from justice, I am here to reveal criminality," he said.

Snowden said that according to unverified documents seen by the *Post*, the NSA had been hacking computers in Hong Kong and on the mainland since 2009. None of the documents revealed any information about Chinese military systems, he said.

One of the targets in the SAR, according to Snowden, was Chinese University and public officials, businesses and students in

the city. The documents also point to hacking activity by the NSA against mainland targets.

Snowden believed there had been more than 61,000 NSA hacking operations globally, with hundreds of targets in Hong Kong and on the mainland.

"We hack network backbones - like huge internet routers, basically - that give us access to the communications of hundreds of thousands of computers without having to hack every single one," he said.

"Last week the American government happily operated in the shadows with no respect for the consent of the governed, but no longer. Every level of society is demanding accountability and oversight."

Snowden said he was releasing the information to demonstrate "the hypocrisy of the US government when it claims that it does not target civilian infrastructure, unlike its adversaries".

"Not only does it do so, but it is so afraid of this being known that it is willing to use any means,

such as diplomatic intimidation, to prevent this information from becoming public."

Since the shocking revelations a week ago, Snowden has been vilified as a defector but also hailed by supporters such as WikiLeaks' Julian Assange.

"I'm neither traitor nor hero. I'm an American," he said, adding that he was proud to be an American. "I believe in freedom of expression. I acted in good faith but it is only right that the public form its own opinion."

Snowden said he had not contacted his family and feared for their safety as well as his own.

"I will never feel safe. Things are very difficult for me in all terms, but speaking

truth to power is never without risk," he said. "It has been difficult, but I have been glad to see the global public speak out against these sorts of systemic violations of privacy."

"All I can do is rely on my training and hope that world governments will refuse to be bullied by the United States into persecuting people seeking political refuge."

Asked if he had been offered asylum by the Russian government, he said: "My only comment is that I am glad there are governments that refuse to be intimidated by great power".

Tens of thousands of Snowden's supporters have signed a petition calling for his pardon in

the United States while many have donated money to a fund to help him.

"I'm very grateful for the support of the public," he said. "But I ask that they act in their interest - save their money for letters to the government that breaks the law and claims it noble."

"The reality is that I have acted at great personal risk to help the public of the world, regardless of whether that public is American, European, or Asian."

The US consulate in Hong Kong could not be contacted yesterday on a public holiday.

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Hong Kong should not be put in a position to defend the criminal attacks of the US NSA

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Snowden: Washington bullying HK

America is desperate to prevent me leaking further information, whistle-blower says

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The US has been "trying to bully" Hong Kong's government into extraditing surveillance whistle-blower Edward Snowden, he told the *Post* in an exclusive interview.

Hong Kong justice officials have so far declined to comment on any official or unofficial approaches they may have from their US counterparts, but the former CIA contractor warned that America was desperate to prevent him leaking further sensitive information.

He said: "I heard today from a reliable source that the United States government is trying to bully the Hong Kong government into extraditing me before the local government can learn of this [the US National Security Agency hacking people in Hong Kong]. The US government will do anything to prevent me from getting this into the public eye,

which is why they are pushing so hard for extradition."

So far, Hong Kong's government has failed to make any statement regarding Snowden's presence in the city since May 20 or where it stands on the issues of asylum and extradition.

Chief Executive Leung Chun-ying has remained tight-lipped on the matter in what has turned out to be an awkward trip to the

United States to promote trade relations. He refused to respond to media questions about the case when he attended a plenary meeting hosted by the Hong Kong-US Business Council in New York yesterday.

Earlier in the week he met New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg to talk about the challenges facing both their cities, but again, no mention of the Snowden affair was made. The meeting had been rescheduled in the immediate aftermath of Snowden revealing himself as the source of the leaks.

Before a dinner in his honour hosted by the Hong Kong Trade Development Council on Tuesday, Leung, who flies home today, was asked six questions by reporters about Snowden.

"I have no comment on individual cases," he said.

Asked whether he had discussed the issue with US officials and whether US officials had sought assistance from the Hong Kong government, Leung again said he could not comment.

Asked about how extraditions to friendly countries were handled, he said: "In general, we follow the laws and our policies."

The leaks have set off a furore in the US with President Barack Obama defending the programme as vital to keeping Americans safe. The director of National Intelligence James Clapper said it gathers data trails left by targeted foreign citizens using the internet outside the US.

The chief of the NSA, General Keith Alexander, was yesterday set to testify on the issue before a US Senate committee. Additional reporting by Gary Cheung in New York



The US flag flutters in front of the US consulate in Garden Road, Central. Photo: AFP

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