



Blatant LIES About Edward Snowden Debunked

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Glenn Greenwald: Now, I'm really somebody who does not use the word lying or lies casually. I try to be very discriminating when I use that term, otherwise it gets overused and it loses its meaning. So when I say that establishment foreign policy ideologues in Washington are lying about the Edward Snowden case and about Tulsi's support for it and about 702 and her concerns about that in order to sink her nomination because they want somebody who is not a critic of the US security state, but a servant of it – I want to demonstrate that to you in a way that is both singular because I'm going to show you a specific case of it, but very generalized as well since these are the lies that are constantly told to demonize anyone who supports Edward Snowden or Edward Snowden himself. It's really quite an amazing example because of how blatant and easily demonstrated these lies are. It comes from National Review, one of the very few sites left that explicitly defends the sort of Neocon-Republican-Bush-Cheney-era of foreign policy. There are a lot of people who do and pretend they don't, but they are very open about the fact they do. It was by Rich Lowry, the longtime editor of that magazine, and he wrote an article: *No to Tulsi Gabbard*. And wrote a long article about why she should be rejected. The two main points that he makes are the same ones. They're in coordination with what Washington is doing and the CIA is doing, and he just outright lies in order to make this argument. Here's what he says, quote: "Throughout her career, Gabbard has been ideologically hostile to the job she's been selected for. She long opposed Section 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, which allows us to monitor the communications of non -Americans –" I just want to highlight this so that you see just how incredibly dishonest this is. "She long opposed Section 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, which allows us to monitor the communications of non-Americans located outside the United States." I can't even overstate what a lie that is. The United States has always been able to monitor the communication of non-Americans located outside the United States. Nobody needed Section 702 enacted in 2008 to accomplish that. The reason Section 702 is controversial, the reason why so many people in both parties, including Mike Johnson before he became speaker, said that they want to reform it or want to get rid of it is because it permits the spying of communications on American citizens inside the United States. It had always been the case that if the NSA or the FBI or the CIA was listening to a call and an

American citizen was on it and they discovered that and they had no warrants, they had to disconnect. They weren't allowed to and aren't allowed, under the Constitution, to listen to our communications with no warrants. That was the program Dick Cheney and George Bush secretly ordered in 2002 for the NSA to start listening to Americans' calls without warrants, without stopping and going to the FISA court to get a warrant. It was widely agreed to be illegal and Nancy Pelosi's House made it retroactively legal through 702 which permitted for the first time the spying without warrants of the American government on the communication of American citizens. Look at this blatant lie here to try and justify rejecting Tulsi Gabbard because she's concerned about 702 by saying that it permits the spying on non-Americans outside the US. Nobody is against it. Not even Edward Snowden, not myself, certainly not Tulsi Gabbard is against the US government spying on non-Americans outside of the United States. Every country does that. No one's against that. The issue is and always has been that this Section 702 which permits spying – without warrants – on the communication of American citizens has been repeatedly abused and yet there's nothing in this article that suggests that. He adds: "This is a little like a secretary of defense nominee being opposed to building tanks." No it's not. It would be like a secretary of defense nominee being opposed to building wasteful tanks, tanks that we don't need that we're buying to fill the coffers of Raytheon and General Dynamics. Or a secretary of defense who is critical of the fact that we fought too many unnecessary wars. There's nothing inconsistent about that or anathema about someone with those views holding that position. You want somebody who's critical of the abuses and excesses of the agency in charge of the agency so they can fix that.

Then he goes on to the next lie, quote: "Gabbard co-sponsored legislation, quote, 'expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that the federal government should drop all charges against Edward Snowden'. The resolution went nowhere because not everyone was as sympathetic to a figure who illegally absconded with classified information about the NSA's metadata tracking program, handed it over to Julian Assange's WikiLeaks (a group that deliberately imperiled US service personnel abroad) and subsequently defected to Russia. Snowden is quite simply a traitor and a fugitive from US justice. A DNI pick taking his side is like an AG nominee thinking the mob gets a bad rap." There are so many lies in this one passage and again I'm using lies very cautiously, very specifically, very deliberately. So first of all, he said that Edward Snowden took the NSA's documents and handed it over to Julian Assange's WikiLeaks. That never happened. Nobody thinks that happened. Anybody with the most passing familiarity with the Snowden story knows that Snowden never gave a single document to WikiLeaks. Nobody claims that. Nobody believes that. I have no idea where he pulled that out from. I mean everybody who knows anything about the Snowden story – and I'm not saying you have to know about the Snowden story but if you're going to go to a magazine and write an article didactically opining on it as a reason to defeat Tulsi Gabbard, you should at least know the basic facts because if not you're going to humiliate yourself which is exactly what Rich Lowry did. He wrote an entire article urging Tulsi Gabbard's rejection based on two claims. One is that she supported Snowden, one is that she opposed section 702. And he blatantly had no idea what he was talking about when it came to either and therefore said blatantly, demonstrably false claims. Snowden gave that archive to journalists, myself and Laura Poitras in particular, when he met us in Hong Kong. And he

gave it to us with the proviso that we work with media outlets – in my case The Guardian and in her case The Washington Post. Nobody ever claims that he gave a single piece of paper to WikiLeaks. And Snowden never released any documents, he only gave journalists, myself and Laura Poitras these documents and relied on us with his guidelines to decide what got released. Whatever got published was because she and The Washington Post or myself and The Guardian or whatever other newspapers we worked with around the world decided it was in the public interest to be published. But WikiLeaks never got a single document from Edward Snowden. It's just completely made up.

And then this idea that he subsequently defected to Russia. It is true that he's physically in Russia. The idea that he defected to Russia is absolutely false. When Edward Snowden left Hong Kong, which he was doing because the US government had issued an extradition order to the Chinese government in Hong Kong, Hong Kong authorities to detain him and they let him go, he had bought a ticket and his plan was to go to Latin America, to either Bolivia or Ecuador. Ecuador was the place that had already given asylum to Julian Assange and he was going to seek asylum in South America. And he bought a ticket that went from Hong Kong to Russia, Russia to Havana, Havana to Latin America. The Cubans had guaranteed him safe passage to travel through Cuba to get to Latin America. Obviously he had to be very careful on the route he was taking because he couldn't go to any places where the US could get his hands on him as they were desperately trying to do. So his ticket that he bought and the diplomatic agreements he had reached was for him to go to Russia and pass right through on his way to Havana, on to Latin America. Once he got to Russia, however, he had learned that his passport had been invalidated by the Obama State Department while in air and that the Cubans had withdrawn their promise of safe passage to him so it could no longer guarantee that if he flew to Havana as originally intended, they would not arrest him and turn him over to the US. And the proof of this is that Obama officials themselves, while trying to smear Snowden by saying, oh, look, he went to Russia, boasted of the fact that they were the ones who trapped him there when he was trying to leave.

I read about this back in August of 2021, one of Obama's top national security advisors, Ben Rhodes, wrote a book. And in it he bragged about the fact that he was the one who forced Snowden to stay in Russia when he was trying to leave. There you see the article: Ben Rhodes' book proves Obama officials' lies and his own, about Edward Snowden and Russia. They had been saying for years, oh, look, he's not a patriot, he went to Russia, our enemy. Even if he had gone to Russia and sought asylum there, can you blame him? The US government was trying to put him in a national security prison for life. You hear a lot of these people, I remember John Kerry always saying he should man up and come home as though what he did wasn't courageous enough. Taking all those documents to alert his fellow citizens to what was being done to their privacy with a 98% chance he was going to end up in prison his whole life – that's not courageous? In order to be courageous, you have to crawl back to the United States and submit the rest of your life to a US prison system that is among the most notorious, especially when it comes to national security crimes. But in the article, this is what I wrote, quote: "Now we have absolute definitive proof that Snowden never intended to stay in Russia, but was deliberately prevented from leaving by the same Obama officials who

exploited the predicament which they created. The proof was supplied unintentionally in the memoir of one of Obama's senior national security advisors, Ben Rhodes, and in the book entitled *The World As It Is: A Memoir of the Obama White House*. It is hard to overstate how dispositively Rhodes' own book proves that Obama officials generally and Rhodes specifically lied blatantly and cavalierly to the public about what happened, a level of sustained and conscious lying that can be explained only by sociopathy. The only reason Snowden is in Russia is because of the actions of Rhodes and his fellow Obama officials who deliberately trap him there, first by invalidating his passport so that he could not board any international flights and then by threatening the Cuban government that any chance for normalization with the US would be permanently destroyed unless they withdrew their guarantee to Snowden of safe passage through Havana, which they then did." And here's Rhodes in his own words, in his book, boasting about what he regards as one of his successes. This is Ben Rhodes, quote, "There was one other more important signal. Around the time of our second meeting, Edward Snowden was stuck in the Moscow airport, trying to find someone who would take him in. Reportedly, he wanted to go to Venezuela, transiting through Havana." That's not where he was going. He was going to Ecuador or Bolivia, but whatever. Doesn't matter. He's saying, "I know he wanted to leave Russia, but I knew that if the Cubans aided Snowden, any rapprochement between our countries would prove impossible. I pulled Alejandro Castro aside and said I had a message that came from President Obama. I reminded him that the Cubans had said they wanted to give Obama, quote, 'political space so that he could take steps to improve relations'. Quote, 'If you take in Snowden, that political space will be gone.' I never spoke to the Cubans about this issue again. A few days later, back in Washington, I woke up to a news report. Quote, 'Former US spy agency contractor Edward Snowden got stuck in the transit zone of a Moscow airport because Havana said it would not let him fly from Russia to Cuba', a Russian newspaper reported. I took it as a message. The Cubans were serious about improving relations."

So I just want you to think about just how unbelievably dishonest and deceitful this is. If you ask any establishment creep in Washington why they think Snowden should be considered a traitor or unpatriotic or whatever, they'll say, oh, he went to Russia. Obviously, he was working with Russia. And those very same officials admit that Snowden never intended to stay in Russia. He was passing through Russia. They purposely trapped him there. And if you go back and look at the news accounts of the time, there were reporters on the flight from Moscow to Havana that he was supposed to be on and he wasn't on there. And that's because of the reasons I just said. It'd be like locking somebody up in a garage or a basement with padlocks and keeping them there for a week and then criticizing them because they miss work. Everything about Snowden being in Russia is all because the US government forced him to be there precisely because they knew it would allow this sort of false propaganda.

Here from Reuters, June 23, 2013, which is the day Snowden left Hong Kong to fly to Moscow on to Cuba and then South America, quote, *US revokes Snowden's passport: official source*. "The United States government has revoked the passport of former national security contractor Edward Snowden, an official source familiar with the decision said on Sunday. It was not immediately clear how Snowden was able to travel and the official offered no details.

An aircraft thought to be carrying him landed in Moscow on Sunday after Hong Kong let the former US NSA contractor leave the territory, despite Washington's efforts to extradite him to face espionage charges." Can you believe these people like Rich Lowry and John Brennan and these Democratic Republican senators say, how can you possibly support Edward Snowden? He's a Russian spy. He's in Russia when they're the ones who forced him to be there when they know that he never wanted to be there in the first place.

Now, as far as whether or not Snowden gave documents to WikiLeaks, in retrospect – I mean, again, anyone who knows the bare minimum about the story knows that's just not what happened. It's just a completely made up fact. I have no idea what in Rich Lowry's brain produced that. It's not even a good lie. It's not a convincing lie. It's laughable. And in fact, during the Snowden reporting, WikiLeaks often attacked Snowden and us because they were angry they didn't have documents and because they disagreed with the way that we were reporting it, meaning they thought we should have released it all or released it much more quickly. And that wasn't what Edward Snowden wanted. They weren't working together at all. WikiLeaks never got any documents.

Here is what Edward Snowden himself said in July of 2016 when WikiLeaks was attacking us. Quote: "Democratizing information has never been more vital and WikiLeaks has helped. But their hostility to even modest curation is a mistake". Meaning WikiLeaks has been complaining because we weren't releasing it all. Obviously, if they had the documents, they could have released it all. But Snowden didn't give it to WikiLeaks because that's not how he wanted it released. And then in response, Julian being Julian, and as you know, I'm a huge defender of WikiLeaks and Julian Assange, but this was a moment of conflict between us on the one hand and them on the other precisely because they didn't have these documents. He responded to Snowden this way, quote, "opportunism won't earn you a pardon from Clinton and curation is not censorship of ruling party cash flows."

Here from The New York Times when this happened, July 30th, 2016, *Snowden and WikiLeaks clash over how to disclose secrets*. Quote, "They may both support the dissemination of government secrets, but Edward J. Snowden and WikiLeaks seem to disagree on how best to do it. On Thursday, Mr. Snowden, the former government contractor who released a trove of NSA documents and now lives in exile in Russia, credited WikiLeaks, a clearinghouse for similar disclosures with furthering the cause of transparency, but he also criticized its unfiltered approach. WikiLeaks is often criticized for releasing documents without editing or regard for the sensitive information they may contain. Mr. Snowden, on the other hand, has said he chose to work with journalists in 2013 to selectively release the NSA documents in order to limit the harmful consequences of exposing what he called the abuses of government surveillance. Vanity Fair in 2014: Julian Assange goes where Glenn Greenwald wouldn't. "Though they're often lumped together as crusaders against state secrets, WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange and journalist Glenn Greenwald don't always see eye to eye. Their differences spilled into public view this week when the WikiLeaks Twitter account took Greenwald and his site The Intercept, to task for redacting the name of a country where the US government is recording every phone call." And just to give you the

very quick synopsis of this, but just to make the point about how stupid it is to think that Snowden gave the documents to WikiLeaks, we were reporting these documents the same – The Washington Post had the archive as well with Laura Poitras. And when the Washington Post reported one of the stories, they reported about a program where the government was collecting every single phone call being made in these five other countries and storing them so that they could just go back and listen to whatever calls they wanted, every single call, en masse, in five different countries. And the Washington Post decided to withhold the identity of all five countries. And I thought that was wrong. I didn't think those countries should be withheld. So we went back to re-report those documents, but this time disclosed the countries where it was being done. They were places like the Bahamas, I mean, not even US enemies. And we decided to publish four of the five countries and withhold the fifth because the government convinced us that publishing the existence of that program in that fifth country could put innocent people in jeopardy. They always said that, but usually they didn't convince us, but in this one case they did. And Snowden's directions to us were, he was a very conservative whistleblower, don't publish anything that could endanger innocent lives. And so we withheld that fifth country. We published the four, not the fifth. WikiLeaks said, how dare you withhold this. You should release it all. And that's what led to this dispute, which is fine. It's a fair dispute. It's an important debate about how government secrets should be released. But Edward Snowden had a much different philosophy than WikiLeaks, which is why he did not go to WikiLeaks, despite the claims of Rich Lowry in his National Review article demanding Tulsi Gabbard's rejection.

Here from BuzzFeed News, May of 2014, *Julian Assange is angry at Glenn Greenwald and he's not going to take it anymore*. "War of the whistleblowers", recounts more of this sort of difference that we had in the way we did. And again, we were guided by Edward Snowden, who again never released a single document. He came to us and said, I want you to be very careful and very cautious in what you release. Only release what is necessary to know for people to understand what the NSA has done to the internet, but don't release information that might endanger people or that isn't in the public interest. And for that reason, the vast majority of the archive was not published. He was as careful and cautious of a whistleblower as it could possibly get.

Here the New York Times, although they're now in the camp of the Democrats, speaking about Snowden like he's some spy, some Russian spy, they published some of the Snowden reporting. The Guardian even shared some of the documents with them, and they actually did some of the Snowden reporting as well. And in 2014, they editorialized in favor of Snowden, quote, *Edward Snowden, whistleblower*. This is The New York Times editorial page. "Seven months ago, the world began to learn the vast scope of the NSA's reach into the lives of hundreds of millions of people in the United States and around the globe as it collects information about their phone calls, their email messages, their friends and contacts, how they spend their days and where they spend their nights. All of this is entirely because of information provided to journalists by Edward Snowden, the former NSA contractor who stole a trove of highly classified documents after he became disillusioned with the agency's voraciousness. The shrill brigade of his critics say Mr. Snowden has done profound damage

to intelligence operations of the United States, but none has presented the slightest proof that his disclosures hurt the nation's security. Many of the mass collection programs Mr. Snowden exposed would work just as well if they were reduced in scope and brought under strict outside oversight, as the presidential panel recommended."

[00:21:28] Here, from Reuters, August of 2013: *The Guardian teams up with The New York Times over the Snowden documents*. I mean, this was so well reported, who had the documents. And it was never WikiLeaks. As for that other lie, we've gone over Section 702 many times. Here from the Electronic Frontier Foundation in January of 2025: *Decoding 702: What is Section 702?* Remember, The National Review said that Tulsi Gabbard should be rejected because she opposes 702, which allows the government to spy on non-Americans outside the US. It's completely the opposite of what 702 is. And then EFF says: "Why can the US government collect my emails? Under authority ostensibly granted by something called Section 702, the US government routinely collects and searches the online communications of innocent Americans without a warrant through what are commonly called 'upstream' and 'PRISM', now called 'downstream' surveillance." I posted and documented these lies in Rich Lowry's National Review article, and of course, to this moment, they have not corrected it. They have no interest in correcting it. The job is not to journalistically examine Tulsi Gabbard's record, it's to destroy Tulsi Gabbard's reputation and synchronomation on behalf of the US security state, and if that has to be done by lies, so be it.

Just as a reminder, from The Guardian, September 20th: *NSA surveillance exposed by Snowden was illegal, a court rule seven years afterwards*. Courts looked at these programs we were able to report that the NSA was doing and concluded they were both illegal and unconstitutional. Is there anybody who really wants to claim that Americans would be better off not knowing about that? And as that first clip with Joe Rogan and Tulsi Gabbard demonstrated, there's no such thing as a whistleblower channel in Washington. You'd think if Edward Snowden had picked up the phone and called Dianne Feinstein or these other pro-surveillance senators and said, oh, I have a bunch of documents showing that the NSA is spying on Americans. They already knew about that in ways that violate the Constitution. You'd think they would have done anything other than call the FBI on him? That's why he did the most conservative thing possible to get the story out, which was work with journalists. He could have uploaded it all through the Internet. He didn't do that. He could have sold it to foreign countries. He didn't do that. He could have handed it out to America's enemies. He didn't do that. He came to journalists and asked us and emphasized and insisted that we be very careful on how we report it, and that's exactly what we did, and yet just constant lies.

[00:24:07] Here from Alex Plitsas in response to Lex Fridman's view that he should be pardoned, quote, "Snowden stole so many files that he couldn't have read the titles, let alone the contents, compromised them, and then fled to Russia. He's a traitor, not a hero. He doesn't deserve a pardon." And then A.G. Hamilton, who's very popular among the hardcore pro-Israel Neocon crowd, said, "Snowden shopped US secrets to various adversaries to find those who would protect him." That is an absolute, complete lie. Not even the US government claims he shopped US secrets to adversaries to find those who would protect

him. These people just make this up. If it was about exposing something bad, he would have limited the information released and shared to allege wrongdoing. He also would have stayed home and faced the consequences. Instead, he fled and handed a ton of secrets over to America's adversaries. Also an absolute, complete lie. I asked him, what is your basis for claiming he handed a ton of secrets over to America's adversaries or that he shopped them around to America? Of course he didn't answer. There's no basis for it. "He's not a hero. He's a traitor, and he deserves to spend his life in prison." Isn't it amazing how these people who never risk anything, who never stand for anything, who never do anything, feel so inferior in the face of people who do actually risk their own liberty or self-interest for a noble cause that they just have to lie about these people and impugn their motivation, calling them a traitor, saying he's a coward, hiding in Russia. A coward? Like whatever else you can say about Edward Snowden, there's nothing cowardly about taking millions of top secret documents under the nose of the NSA, going to Hong Kong and meeting journalists, choosing Hong Kong on purpose because it's not part of mainland China. It's a symbol in his view of democracy and independence and civil liberties, but still a place where we would be protected from the CIA, and hand them over knowing that he was likely to spend the rest of his life in prison, but saying he thought it was worth it. It's easy to call someone like the coward if you are somebody who would never and have never done anything remotely as courageous as that.

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