Beat: Business

Snowden warns future generations will have `no concept of privacy`

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USPA News - American whistleblower Edward Snowden on Wednesday addressed the British public in a televised Christmas message, urging for a continued public debate to end mass surveillance and warning that future generations will have no concept of privacy. Snowden, whose release of top-secret National Security Agency (NSA) documents have revealed details about the extent of the U.S. government`s surveillance on phone and internet communications, made his first television broadcast as part of Channel 4`s "Alternative Christmas Message." "Recently, we learned that our governments, working in concert, have created a system of worldwide mass surveillance, watching everything we do," Snowden said.

He referred to "1984" author George Orwell who warned against surveillance through microphones and video cameras, but said that what Orwell 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 30-year-old American, who has been staying at an undisclosed location in Russia since being granted temporary political asylum in August, said privacy allows people to determine who they are and who they want to be. He therefore urged the public debate surrounding his disclosures to continue. "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 said. "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." First airing in 1993, the Channel 4 Christmas message - the alternative to the Queen`s annual televised message to the nation - is typically reserved for provocative or offbeat addresses. Previous addresses have been delivered by then-Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, September 11, 2001 survivor Genelle Guzman, and fictional characters such as The Simpsons. 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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