

Spy Software to Monitor Phone Conversations, E-mails and Text Messages: UN Counter-Terrorism Official to “Investigate” US and British Spying Agencies

By [James Corbett](#)

Global Research, December 05, 2013
[Press TV and GRTV](#)

Region: [Europe](#), [USA](#)

Theme: [Intelligence](#), [Police State & Civil Rights](#)

A senior UN counter-terrorism official is to assess Edward Snowden's revelations that US and British intelligence agencies are using specific software to retain and monitor telephone conversations, e-mails, and text messages. UN Special Rapporteur Ben Emmerson said in an interview with the British newspaper The Guardian that his inquiry would seek to establish whether the British parliament had been misled about the capabilities of the G-C-H-Q, which is the British intelligence agency that specializes in electronic surveillance. He added that the media had a duty and right to publish stories about the activities of British and U-S spy agencies. The inquiry is expected to make a series of recommendations to the UN General Assembly next year. (www.corbettreport.com)

Press TV has conducted an interview with James Corbett, the editor of the corbettreport.com, about the United Nations launching an investigation into the massive surveillance programs of American and British intelligence agencies following revelations from US whistleblower Edward Snowden.

What follows is an approximate transcription of the interview.

Press TV: This inquiry will not have much power but it can make recommendations to the UN General Assembly. What kind of recommendations do you think it is going to be making?

Corbett: Well it is difficult to say what recommendations it will be able to make especially because the UN General Assembly is a body without any teeth as it has been demonstrated over the previous decades.

And again I am not sure what this new inquiry is going to uncover because I think only the most naïve in international relations have not understood already that they were being spied on by the US and Britain and other intelligence agencies. Besides, it is really just the Edward Snowden's leaks [that] are bringing this to the forefront.

So I am not sure that this inquiry will really have really much effect other than a symbolic one and I do not think any recommendations other than the recommendations not to spy on allies will be the result of this type of inquiry.

Press TV: But does the symbolism of this go very far in putting pressure on governments like

that of the UK and the US who have been pressuring the media like The Guardian newspaper to not publish these revelations?

Corbett: Well certainly the pressure is mounting not only from the political classes but perhaps more importantly from the average public which is now increasingly aware that these practices go on.

But I think if the UN was being serious about really investigating these claims, they would start by looking in their own backyard because of course the most egregious cases of spying have happened at UN summits or on UN premises in New York as has come out time and time again in the past and in fact just recent revelations from earlier this month, sorry earlier last month, showing once again for example Indonesia was spied on by the US at the UN Summit and we have had reassurances from the Obama administration back in October that they would not be spying on the UN anymore but given the track record of what has happened at the UN in the past, I think we can take those assurances for what they are worth.

So there certainly is a symbolic value in this and in any way it is good I think to put the pressure on these agencies to stop this type of spying activity.

Press TV: So then basically what you are saying is that we will see a lot of condemnation coming out of this for the US, for the UK and maybe even more revelations but it will be business as usual when it comes to our privacy online as far as telecommunications go?

Corbett: Very much so and in fact we see that the biggest political brouhaha is about the spying that is happening on politicians themselves, on governments, on government agencies but there is not that type of widespread condemnation of what is happening to the average citizens.

And as you mentioned there and as Snowden revelations and other leaks have made clear, basically communications across the board on the internet are being collected wholesale by the NSA and its adjunct in Britain and in other intelligence agencies across the world and I think there needs to be more outrage on that issue rather than specifically on spying on governments.

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