

Edward Snowden calls for technologists to build an internet for the people

By Common Dreams

22 July 2015



"Everybody should be safe all the time, else we let others choose who will be safe or not," American whistleblower Edward Snowden tells a meeting of independent internet engineers in Prague. [Nadia Prupis reports \(via \[Common Dreams\]\(#\)\)](#).

THE INTERNET is not for businesses, governments, or spies — it's for users and it's up to the independent web engineers to keep it safe for them.

That was the most recent message from [National Security Agency](#) (NSA) whistleblower [Edward Snowden](#), who surprised a meeting of the [Internet Engineering Task Force](#) (IETF) in Prague, Czech Republic on Monday with a webcast Q&A.

"Who is the Internet for, who does it serve, who is the IETF's ultimate customer?" Snowden asked of the roughly 170 engineers in the audience, referring to users.

He added that current safety protocols on the web make too much private user data available to the NSA and other intelligence agencies and businesses.

Snowden continued:

"We need to divorce identity from persona in a lasting way."

The IETF is one of the primary bodies creating voluntary standards of use, design and management of the internet, and Monday's meeting gave Snowden a welcome platform to promote a freer and safer web.

A frank live chat with Snowden...something that can happen just at an [@ietf](#) meeting! Internet democracy on stage. [pic.twitter.com/nbAqP6nmRi](#)

— Simon Pietro Romano (@spromano) [July 19, 2015](#)

As the Register's special IETF members with a standing invitation to [@metadata](#)

As one attendee ([@DBP_A](#)) says: "... have the session independent and many are still emboldened by the fact that the NSA managed to park a number before internet protocols were developed by the IETF and even subvert some of its standards through their bid to change details of the standards."

that would give the spies big easy access.'

Snowden's 2013 revelations that NSA was collecting bulk telephony and internet metadata put an end to the ongoing global debate about the nature of government surveillance and the nature of individual privacy — a phenomenon termed by media critic Professor [Jay Rosen](#) as "[the Snowden Effect](#)".



For its part, the IETF responded to the leaks by developing a memorandum, known as a "[Request for Comment](#)" (RFC), entitled '*Pervasive Monitoring is an Attack*'.

In his Q&A with the engineers on Monday, Snowden reiterated the dangers of invasive collection of information.

"People are being killed based on metadata, this is real," he said.

This story was originally published in Common Dreams on 29/7/15 under the title Snowden's Plea to Top Technologists: Build an Internet for the People' and has been republished under a Creative Commons licence.

While the session was not recorded, many attendees [tweeted](#) out some of Snowden's key points during the address, including the need for reduced "middleboxes", or networking devices that filter internet traffic on its way to its final destination.

Snowden [said](#) about middleboxes:

"Every middlebox is an increased attack surface. The NSA will want to subvert internet security, this is what they do."

The Register continued:

'He also argued that having identifiable "long lasting" hardware addresses was "extremely dangerous," as it connects people to, say, a MAC address when they use wireless internet connections, which can put an immediate flag on their identity and location.'

Snowden connected the role of internet engineers to the fight for civil liberties and the essential right to privacy:

"It is our duty to pass on the human rights we have inherited. Technologists are at the vanguard of that."

Snowden continued:

"We need not only to think what the problems are today, but how we preserve the internet for the future. Everybody should be safe all the time, else we let others choose who will be safe or not."

Snowden addresses the IETF (live) after screening of "citizen four" at IETF-Meeting. Gets standing ovations. pic.twitter.com/UN5pdhPHkz

— Clemens Schrimpe

(@csch42) [July 19, 2015](#)