

Subject: Re: Additional thoughts on today

From: Laura Poitras [REDACTED]

Date: 13.03.19, 22:42 -0400

To: Michael Bloom [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Michael,

In response, here is the memo I sent to the board after learning yesterday of The Intercept's decision to shut down the Snowden Archive. It outlines my response to your email.

This is a sad day for the organization.

Laura

Memo

Date: March 13, 2019
Regarding: The Intercept's Decision to Close Snowden Archive
To: Board of Directors, First Look Media
From: Laura Poitras

I believe the Board should be consulted about The Intercept's decision to shut down access to the Snowden archive and eliminate the trusted research team overseeing its security. I was not consulted about this decision, and I was just told that the Board was also not consulted. I learned of this decision yesterday, March 12, 2019, and I have requested that the board be informed.

I strongly object to the decision. The cost to maintain access and the research staff who oversee security and checks and balances, is roughly \$400,000, or 1.5% of FLMW's 2019 budget. Given the ongoing historical value of the archive, and the company's enormous investment to date, shutting down access without a meaningful review process involving all stakeholders, including the Board and myself, is staggering and violates the core principles upon which the company was founded.

While it is true the archive can no longer be reported on as "news," it remains the most significant historical archive documenting the rise of the surveillance state in the twenty first century. How a news organization would take such care to secure this archive, and then walk away from that knowledge and its investment without a proper review involving the board and all stakeholders, defies my understanding. I have advocated for years that we transition our approach to long-form books and historical research, formats that would maximize the historical impact of the archive not driven by the news cycle. Sadly, discussions like that are not happening because we didn't even bother to talk about the possibilities before a few stakeholders decided they want to shut it down and eliminate the key staff who have vigilantly protected it.

This decision and the way it was handled would be a disservice to our source, the risks we've all taken, and most importantly, to the public for whom Edward Snowden blew the whistle.

I request that the Board intervene and stop any action until a proper review with all stakeholders is convened.

On 13.03.19 22:04, Michael Bloom wrote:

Team:

This was a difficult day. As numerous media outlets have discovered over the last several years, the current business environment sometimes requires painful decisions, and it is always agonizing when reorganization results in the loss of colleagues' jobs.

The Intercept is proud of its reporting on the Snowden archive, and we are thankful to Laura Poitras and Glenn Greenwald for making it available to us. It is crucial to recall that major news outlets that possessed large portions of the Snowden archive – newsrooms much larger than The Intercept's – ceased reporting on it years ago. Many decided that the resources required to continue to work on the archive were not justified by the journalistic value the remaining documents provide, as those documents have aged. For five years, the company expended substantial resources to continue to report on the Snowden archive, but The



Intercept has now decided to focus on other editorial priorities.

It is our hope that Glenn and Laura are able to find a new partner – such as an academic institution or research facility – that will continue to report on and publish the documents in the archive consistent with the public interest.

Best,

Michael

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fieldofvision.org

Attachments:

Archive Closure Memo – March 13, 2019.pdf

28.9 KB

