

Rocky Anderson vs. NSA & FBI

Former SLC mayor recently filed a lawsuit against the U.S. government

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[3]

- Rocky Anderson

When former Salt Lake City Mayor Rocky Anderson reactivated his law license, it appears he also reactivated his activism. Long a civil-liberties defender, he decided to call out the federal government after reports surfaced in 2013 that the NSA and FBI allegedly conducted illegal surveillance on Salt Lake-area residents before and during the 2002 Winter Games. He recently filed a lawsuit (that two City Weekly staff joined) seeking damages from the U.S. government for unlawful invasions of privacy.

Anderson explained the purpose of his lawsuit below:

The Winter Olympics were so 13 years ago. Why sue now?

Apparently, no one outside the NSA and FBI knew of the blanket surveillance over Salt Lake City during the 2002 Olympics until *The Wall Street Journal* broke the story in an article on Aug. 20, 2013. The information would probably never have been known to the public if one or more courageous sources hadn't provided the information.

The 9/11 attacks took place less than six months prior to the 2002 Winter Olympics. Wasn't safety a huge issue, serving to justify such drastic measures?

As mayor during the Olympics, my greatest concern, even before 9/11, was safety. In fact, the only heated words between Mitt Romney and myself related to my incessant

demands that we have a far more robust immediate response capacity in the event of violence or major property destruction. However, there was absolutely no justification for the abandonment of the rule of law and unprecedented violations of the protections of individual rights, including fundamental privacy, provided by our state and federal constitutions and statutes passed by Congress to prevent these very sorts of Stasi-like governmental abuses. To accept the illegal and unconstitutional spying on people in this country by our government only helps pave the way for further disregard of the rule of law by the executive branch and, ultimately, a more totalitarian society.

Did employees at local phone and Internet companies need to cooperate?

Some employees of telecommunications service companies would have needed to cooperate. At the time, such cooperation would have constituted a federal felony, just as every instance of the surveillance by the FBI and NSA constituted a federal felony. That is exactly why, in 2008, Congress (including then-Senator Obama) voted for the unprecedented, outrageous bill [an update to the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act] granting retroactive immunity from prosecution and civil law suits for telecommunication companies that cooperated with the illegal and unconstitutional initiatives of the federal government under the Bush administration.

What's happened to the data that was captured during the Olympics?

We do not know what has happened to the data unlawfully captured by the NSA and FBI. However, the guiding philosophy of the NSA is to hoard everything possible so it will be available in future years if the government seeks to investigate anyone who has been subjected to surveillance. One director of the NSA justified such hoarding by saying, "You have to have a haystack to find a needle in the haystack." An unbelievable amount of data from illegal surveillance is being stored at the enormous NSA facility recently constructed in Bluffdale.

Links

1. <http://www.cityweekly.net/utah/ArticleArchives?author=2124596>
2. <http://twitter.com/JerreWroble>
3. http://media2.fdncms.com/saltlake/imager/u/original/2947761/news_fivespot1-1-9eb6f0800a9eac9c.jpg

