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Gag Order on Lavabit's Levison Lifted After Three-Year Battle

Alexandria, VA--Lavabit founder Ladar Levison can finally confirm that Edward Snowden was the target of the 2013 investigation, which led to the shutdown of the Lavabit email service. The original case concerned law enforcement's authority to compel the disclosure of an SSL/TLS private key, which belonged to Lavabit, and was used to protect the communications of all 410,000 customers, when only one of those customers was the subject of a criminal investigation. After three years, and five separate attempts, the federal judge overseeing the case has granted Mr. Levison permission to speak freely about investigation. The recently delivered court decision unseals the vast majority of the court filings, and releases Mr. Levison from the gag order, which has limited his ability to discuss the proceedings until now.

Mr. Levison has consistently relied on the First Amendment in his court filings, which sought to remove the gag orders entered against him. He argued that such orders are an unconstitutional restraint against speech, and an affront to the democratic process. He plans to use his newfound freedom to discuss the case during a planned presentation on Compelled Decryption at DEF CON 24 in Las Vegas, NV.

"One of the rights guaranteed to Americans, and a cornerstone for a functional democracy, is the freedom to speak the truth," stated Mr. Levison in announcing the court decision. "The First Amendment protects opinions, including those unfavorable to government, from injunctions against speech. The gag orders in this case were a violation of that inalienable right. No American should have to live for three years, gagged, with every word carefully weighed, when such opinions are concerned with such a public and controversial issue as state surveillance. I believe the public only grants permission to be governed when it knows the means and methods its government uses to protect the body politic. While I'm pleased that I can finally speak freely about the target of the investigation, I also know the fight to protect our collective freedom is far from over. That is why I will continue to do everything within my power to protect our right to speak freely and privately. We must decide when speech is necessary. Our rights must never be subject to the whims of those officials we seek to criticize."

In order to continue the fight, Mr. Levison is forming the Lavabit Legal Defense Foundation (or "LavaLegal"), a non-profit organization founded to, among other things, protect service providers from becoming complicit in unconstitutional activities, and fight secret attempts aimed circumventing digital privacy or impinging upon the right of those involved to speak of the experience. The foundation will be funded by donations from people and organizations all over the world that want to help protect digital privacy and bolster our collective defense against government overreach. Donations can be accepted at the foundation's rally.org [\[https://rally.org/lavalegal\]](https://rally.org/lavalegal) page or through bitcoin donations at 1Bqy3SxZ27ZUogEeiKHYqPsmFwuRTErMu.

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