

HOW HPSCI'S STAFFERS USED MIS-CITATIONS TO TURN EDWARD SNOWDEN INTO A LYING FLUNKIE

I want to take a close look at this paragraph (from PDF 7) of the House Intelligence report on Snowden, to show how they're (mis)using information.

(U) By his own account, Snowden was a poor student.⁴ He dropped out of high school in his sophomore year and began taking classes at the local community college.⁵ Snowden hoped that the classes would allow him to earn a General Education Diploma (GED), but nothing the Committee found indicates that he did so. To the contrary, on an applicant resume submitted to NSA in 2012, Snowden indicated that he graduated from "Maryland High School" in 2001;⁶ earlier, in 2006, Snowden had posted on a public web forum that he did not "have a degree of ANY type. I don't even have a high school diploma."⁷

In its first claim, HPSCI says Snowden was "by his own account," a "poor student." It cites this Greenwald and Poitras intro to Snowden, which says something different: "By his own admission, he was not a stellar student."

The next claim says he dropped out of high school in his sophomore year and then took community college classes, which relies on this report, which in turn cites the public schools as well as the Guardian story.

1991-1998: Snowden attends schools in the Anne Arundel County Public School System in Maryland from the elementary level to high school, where he dropped out his sophomore year. He'll later say he earned his GED. (Source: Anne Arundel County Public Schools, The Guardian)

1999-2005: Snowden takes a variety of classes from Anne Arundel Community College in Arnold, Maryland. He does not take any cyber security or computer science classes, however, and he never earns a certificate or degree. (Source: Anne Arundel Community College)

Note, the committee has said it didn't do an investigation because of the ongoing criminal investigation into Snowden. But there is no reason they couldn't have called Anne Arundel County Public Schools rather than relying on an ABC piece; it wouldn't have required a long distance call!

The third claim is that Snowden hoped the (community college) classes would permit him to earn a GED, "but nothing the Committee found indicates he did so." That's not sourced. Again, it doesn't say whether or not they called Maryland.

This is what Bart Gellman said in September about Snowden's claim to have gotten a GED.

I do not know how the committee could get this one wrong in good faith. According to the official Maryland State Department of Education test report, which I have reviewed, Snowden sat for the high school equivalency test on May 4, 2004. He needed a score of 2250 to pass. He scored 3550. His Diploma No. 269403 was dated June 2, 2004, the same month he would have graduated had he returned to Arundel High School after losing his sophomore year to mononucleosis. In the interim, he took courses at Anne Arundel Community College.

The fourth claim is that Snowden told TAO he did have a GED, claiming to have received it on 6/21/2001 from "Maryland High School."

Finally, the report says that Snowden stated that he did not have a degree of any type, citing this NYT profile rather than citing the forum itself or even the Ars Technica article that first reported it. It is absolutely true that Snowden said he didn't have a high school diploma, but in context, Snowden was responding to someone focused primarily on a college degree.

Visigothan: No college degree.

Over 10 years work experience in my field

No communicable or other diseases

Not a religious wackjob

I think I'm good on everything except the college degree.

TheTrueHOOHA: First off, the degree thing is crap, at least domestically. If you *really* have ten years of solid, provable IT experience (and given that you say you're 25, I think it'd probably be best to underestimate), you CAN get a very well paying IT job. You just need to be either actively looking now or get the fuck out of California. I have no degree, nor even a high school diploma, but I'm making much more than what they're paying you even though I'm only claiming six years of experience. It's tough to "break in," but once you land a "real" position, you're made.

Now, unless the forum has changed over the years (in which case the date could be wrong), the NYT *miscited Snowden*, claiming he said "I don't have a degree of ANY type. I don't even have a high school diploma," when in fact the forum itself says he said, "I have no degree, nor even a high school diploma." Moreover, in context, Snowden is distinguishing between a "degree" and a "diploma," which may suggest he's thinking of the actual class work versus the (GED) degree.

That claim is modified by this footnote, citing an unnamed "associate" – is this Pulitzer Prize winning Bart Gellman they're talking about? – describing that Snowden did get a GED in 2004. [Update: Indeed it is! HPSCI hid how credible the source for this was and what he based it off of!!!]

⁷ See *supra*, note 3. One of Snowden's associates claims to have reviewed official educational records that demonstrate Snowden's passage of a high school equivalency test and receipt of high school equivalency diploma in June 2004. Any receipt of such a diploma in 2004 stands in tension with Snowden's 2006 claim to not have a "degree of any type [or]... even a high school diploma"; and with his 2012 resume, which stated that he either left or graduated from "Maryland High School" in 2001.

But having acknowledged that there *are* official records they could consult but have not, they instead just present the admittedly conflicting claims made in secondary sources (assuming they got the dates correct, but there are dates that are absolutely incorrect elsewhere in this report). There's no actual attempt to contact local schools to get to the bottom of it all.

And yet, they then use these conflicting claims (based on inaccurate citations) to claim, in the summary, that Snowden is a "serial exaggerator."

(U) Fourth, Snowden was, and remains, a serial exaggerator and fabricator. A close review of Snowden's official employment records and submissions reveals a pattern of intentional lying. He claimed to have left Army basic training because of broken legs when in fact he washed out because of shin splints. He claimed to have obtained a high school degree equivalent when in fact he never did. He claimed to have worked for the CIA as a "senior

To make that claim with respect to his high school education, you would actually have had to do the work to ascertain the truth. The report made no effort to do so.