

Former Lawyer Breaks Government Surveillance Story

By [Donald Scarinci](#)

The National Security Agency's top-secret cell phone surveillance program is front-page news. Yet many still don't realize that the reporter behind the story is actually a lawyer.

Glenn Greenwald worked for two [New York law firms](#) before launching his blog, Unclaimed Territory. *Salon Magazine* picked up the blog, and Greenwald now works full time as a journalist/blogger.

Greenwald's area of interest is the First Amendment, where the media and the law frequently collide. As an attorney, he represented white supremacist Matt Hale in a trademark lawsuit. As a journalist, Greenwald has written intensely about the proper balance between security and privacy, focusing on surveillance programs under both the Obama and Bush Administrations.

Greenwald credits his legal training with his success as a journalist. "I approach my journalism as a litigator," he told the [New York Times](#). "People say things, you assume they are lying, and dig for documents to prove it."

As professions, the two have a lot more in common. In order to be successful, journalists and lawyers must be able to think on their feet, work under pressure, meet strict deadlines, and write exceptionally well.

Greenwald, of course, isn't the first to make the transition. Journalism is the most common alternative career option for law school graduates. Philip Graham graduated from Harvard University Law School before founding the *Washington Post*. Former lawyers currently working in journalism include Bob Woodruff, Savannah Guthrie, Greta Van Susteren and Catherine Crier.

In the blogosphere, Tom Goldstein's SCOTUSblog has become a preeminent source for coverage of the U.S. Supreme Court. On opposite end of the spectrum, David Lat is equally as successful at the helm of legal gossip site, Above the Law.

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