

US threatens Russia, China in its pursuit of Snowden

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The Obama administration's diplomatic bullying against Russia, China, Hong Kong and Ecuador in its efforts to seize NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden is exposing to the world the lawlessness of US imperialism.

The White House is insisting that Snowden be handed over to face espionage charges in the US. His only "crime", however, has been to expose the NSA's massive electronic spying operations against the entire American population as well as people and governments around the world in breach of the US Constitution and international law.

US Secretary of State John Kerry demanded on Monday that the Russian government abide by the "standards of the law" and threatened unspecified "consequences" if Moscow did not "respect our desires" and Snowden "was wilfully allowed to board an aeroplane."

Russian President Vladimir Putin responded yesterday, dismissing Washington's accusations that the government was aiding a fugitive as "ravings and rubbish." He pointed out that Snowden, who is currently in the transit area of Moscow's Sheremetyevo airport, had not entered Russia and had broken no Russian law. The US has no extradition treaty with Russia.

The US demands are being delivered with increasing hysteria and threats being hurled recklessly in all directions. White House spokesman Jay Carney warned China of US reprisals, saying that the decision to allow Snowden to fly out of Hong Kong on Sunday for Moscow "unquestionably has a negative impact" on relations.

The Chinese foreign ministry yesterday rejected US accusations as "groundless", insisting that the Hong Kong administration had acted in accordance with the

law. The ruling Communist Party's *People's Daily* stated: "The world will remember Edward Snowden. It was his fearlessness that tore off Washington's sanctimonious mask."

The Obama administration's appeals to the "standards of law" and legal process are utterly hypocritical. The only "law" that the White House recognises is that which serves the political, economic and strategic interests of US imperialism. If its diktats are not obeyed, the "consequences" will be diplomatic and economic retaliation, or worse. It is not the rule of law that it upholds, but the law of the jungle—might is right.

It is not hard to imagine the Obama administration's response if the shoe were on the other foot—a Chinese or a Russian official who fled to the US with a computer full of files that revealed the extent of police state measures in those countries. He or she would be welcomed with open arms, hailed as a heroic political dissident and given full protection.

Both Kerry and Carney denounced Snowden for seeking asylum in countries that lack democratic freedoms. But what of the US itself? What Snowden has exposed is the extent to which a massive police state apparatus has been erected that operates outside the law and in violation of the constitution. Its purpose is not to protect the American people, but to protect the interests of a tiny, ultra-wealthy financial aristocracy from the American people.

Carney went one step further, declaring that Snowden's failure to criticise China and Russia demonstrated that "his true motive throughout has been to injure the national security of the United States." With the spokesman of the president joining the countless denunciations of Snowden as a "traitor" by American commentators and politicians, the White

House has itself precluded any possibility that he would receive a fair trial in the United States.

Like Private Bradley Manning who exposed the war crimes and dirty diplomatic intrigues of American imperialism via WikiLeaks, Snowden would receive no justice in the US. He would be interrogated and abused then condemned to a lengthy jail term or execution via a kangaroo court. By any standard, Snowden is fleeing political persecution—the benchmark under international law for granting asylum.

The Obama administration's criminality was underscored by Carney's response to questions at Monday's press conference as to whether the US would use its war planes to force a Russian passenger jet carrying Snowden to land and give him up. The White House spokesman was asked three times to comment on Russian press reports that Snowden had not boarded a plane for Cuba on Monday for that reason. Carney refused to rule out that option.

There are no legal lines the gangsters in the White House will not cross. Under the bogus "war on terror", the US has waged wars of aggression against Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and is preparing to do the same against Syria and Iran—the crime for which Nazi leaders were tried and convicted after World War II. The indefinite detention of prisoners in Guantanamo Bay without trial flouts any conception of basic democratic rights.

Snowden has every reason to fear the worst. The Obama administration has arrogated to itself the "right" to track down and murder anyone who it regards as a threat to US interests. Hundreds of people, including American citizens, have been killed in drone attacks in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Yemen and other parts of the world.

The same contempt for international law and national sovereignty is evident in the US attempts to bully and intimidate Russia and China into handing over Snowden. The rancour of the exchanges testifies to the sharp tensions that have been generated by the Obama administration's aggressive interventions in the Middle East and in Asia to reassert US global dominance and undermine its rivals, especially China and Russia. The confrontation over Snowden is another warning that the US will brook no opposition and is prepared to plunge the world into war in pursuit of its interests.

Workers and youth in the United States and around

the world have a responsibility to come to the defence of Snowden, as well as Manning and WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange. Support must be built in the US and internationally in workplaces, universities and schools as well as working class areas to demand the dropping of all charges against Snowden and the release of all documents related to US spying operations.

The defence of basic democratic rights is bound up with the broader struggle to build an independent political movement of the international working class fighting for a socialist alternative to the bankrupt capitalist system that offers nothing but the barbarism of war, austerity and dictatorship.



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