

International gangsterism in Snowden manhunt

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The forcing down Tuesday night of President Evo Morales's jet on suspicion that it was carrying Edward Snowden to asylum in Bolivia is part of a descent into imperialist lawlessness unprecedented since the 1930s.

France, Portugal, Italy and Spain all refused to allow the plane to cross their air space, rescinding approval of its flight plan after it had been airborne for three hours and forcing it to make an emergency landing, with its fuel running low, in Vienna, Austria.

In La Paz, hundreds of demonstrators gathered outside the French embassy, throwing stones, burning the French flag and shouting, "Hypocrite France!" As if to prove their point, France's Socialist Party President François Hollande claimed Wednesday that it had all been a misunderstanding, and had he known Morales was aboard, the plane would have had no problem.

The lives of Morales and other senior Bolivian officials were placed in imminent danger as they returned from a summit of gas-exporting nations in Moscow, where the former National Security Agency (NSA) contractor has been trapped in an airport transit zone for 11 days, with no country yet willing to receive him. Afterward, the Bolivian president was essentially held hostage in Vienna until the next morning, when the European countries lifted the flight ban.

These methods amount to state terrorism and air piracy. While they were carried out by European governments, there is not a shred of doubt that their real author was the Obama administration in Washington, which is waging a relentless, extralegal manhunt for Snowden in retaliation for his exposure of the NSA's secret and unconstitutional spying program against millions of people in the United States and all over the world.

Morales reported that Spain's ambassador to Austria

came to the airport and told him he would inform the Bolivians of whether their plane would be allowed to pass through Spanish airspace and refuel in the Canary Islands after Madrid had consulted with "friends" in the morning. There is no doubt that these "friends" reside at the US State Department and the Langley, Virginia headquarters of the CIA.

The actions of the European leaders are extraordinary. Secret files made public by Snowden only days before exposed Washington's systematic spying on their governments and diplomatic missions as well as the European Union itself. The French government had vowed that the revelations would preclude the signing of an EU-US trade pact or virtually any other collaboration.

Yet these governments acted as willing accomplices in Washington's scheme to effectively kidnap the president of Bolivia on the unfounded suspicion that he was exercising the sovereign right of granting Snowden asylum. The apparent basis for this suspicion was Morales' statement in Moscow that Bolivia was "ready to accept those who disclose espionage" and would seriously consider Snowden's appeal for asylum.

That Snowden merits asylum is unquestionable. If he falls into the hands of US authorities, he has every reason to fear he may be subjected to torture, incarceration without trial, or death, all of which have been meted out with impunity by Washington under the pretext of its "global war on terrorism."

All of the pretensions that US imperialism is a champion of "human rights" and democracy have been exploded by the Snowden affair, arousing collective contempt and anger throughout the world. While Washington is occasionally prepared to embrace right-wing dissidents who function in their own countries as assets of US policy, when it comes to anyone who

stands up to challenge its interests, Washington's answer is violence.

The forcing down of Morales's plane has once again exposed Barack Obama as a liar. It is barely a week since the US president cynically dismissed fears that he would "be scrambling jets" to capture Snowden. Yet this is precisely what he would have done had Washington's NATO allies refused to obey his illegal order to intercept Morales's flight.

As for the media, it remains as always a faithful conduit of government lies. On Wednesday, the talking heads of CNN were describing the incident with Morales's plane as "bizarre," meaning they had not yet been given an official pretext to justify a flagrant international crime. Had the Bolivian president's plane crashed in the sea, they would have no doubt blamed him for his own death.

The US government has emerged ever more openly in the Snowden affair as a gangster regime that is prepared to kill to keep the ex-NSA contractor or anyone else from exposing its crimes. Obama is nothing but a front man for the Pentagon and the vast intelligence apparatus that dominates his administration.

On the world stage, this government more and more relies on militarism and aggression, treating nations like Bolivia in the manner that Hitler dealt with small nations in the late 1930s and 1940s.

Here the old adage that foreign policy is an extension of domestic policy finds expression. At home, as Snowden's exposure of the NSA domestic spying operation makes clear, the US government is erecting the infrastructure of a police state dictatorship.

This has been spelled out in both Snowden's case and in the US military's court martial of Private Bradley Manning for providing secret documents on the Afghanistan and Iraq wars as well as classified State Department cables to the anti-secrecy organization WikiLeaks.

In summing up their case Monday, military prosecutors argued that Manning was guilty of "aiding the enemy" because material he is accused of making public was seen and republished by Al Qaeda. This included the "Collateral Murder" video depicting the massacre of Iraqi civilians by a US helicopter gunship.

According to this logic, anyone—journalists, demonstrators and the *World Socialist Web Site*

itself—who dares to expose US war crimes, or indeed any crime of the US government against the American people, could be charged as a traitor and spy for "aiding the enemy," or designated an "associate" of Al Qaeda and placed on a kill list.

The courageous actions of Edward Snowden have earned him broad popular support from people around the world as well as in the US itself, where the words spoken by Abraham Lincoln nearly a century and a half ago—"of the people, by the people and for the people"—read today like an indictment of the existing regime, which is of and by the military/intelligence apparatus, and for the banks, the corporations and the financial oligarchy.

Snowden is hated by wealthy ruling layers not only in the US, but in Western Europe as well, for exposing the criminal conspiracy being organized by gangster regimes against the democratic rights of the people.

In the end, Snowden's defense depends crucially on the political intervention and support of the working class.



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