

US threatens Russia with ‘long-term problems’ as Snowden applies for temporary asylum

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Edward Snowden has formally applied for temporary asylum in Russia, according to statements made by his attorney on Tuesday. The whistleblower has been stranded at Sheremetyevo airport in Moscow for weeks after the Obama administration unleashed an international bullying operation to isolate, extradite, and possibly kill the young man.

He “will leave [the airport transit area] in the next few days because some legal papers are still required to be formalized,” said his lawyer, Anatoly Kucherena. It remains unclear whether Russian officials will accept Snowden’s request, which would allow him to remain in Russia for up to one year. Snowden has indicated that he would use temporary asylum to facilitate travel to countries in Latin America that have offered him asylum.

“He is surely concerned about what would happen to him if he was denied temporary asylum in Russia,” Kucherena said. “He is also afraid of torture, and that he could get executed. And what he says sounds quite convincing, because the US still administers capital punishment and torture.”

The reports that Russia may grant Snowden temporary asylum have been met with indignation by Democratic and Republican officials in the United States.

Republican Senator Lindsey Graham, who is close to the military-intelligence apparatus, was apoplectic. He called Russia’s actions “outrageous” and voiced his support for a boycott of the 2014 Winter Olympics in Russia.

“I would send the Russians the most unequivocal signal I could send them,” he sputtered. “We certainly haven’t reset our relationship with Russia in a positive

way. At the end of the day, if they grant this guy asylum it’s a breach of the rule of law as we know it and is a slap in the face to the United States.”

Graham’s hypocritical references to “the rule of law” have been echoed on numerous occasions by the Obama administration, which escalated a series of threats directed at Russia.

“The Russian government has an opportunity here to work with us,” said Press Secretary Jay Carney on Tuesday. “This should not be something that causes long-term problems for US-Russian relations.”

Carney indicated that if Russia would turn Snowden over, they could “resolve this situation that they have been dealing with now for three weeks.”

“Our interest has always been in seeing him expelled from Russia and returned to the United States,” Carney said. “He should not be allowed to engage in further international travel except as necessary to the United States,” where he will be “afforded every bit of due process.”

This is a bold-faced lie. The Obama administration has gone further in effacing the constitutional right to due process than any other presidency. Carney speaks for an administration that kills American citizens without a warrant or a trial, has declared the right to indefinitely detain anyone without a warrant or a trial, continues to force-feed prisoners at Guantanamo Bay, has kept Bradley Manning locked up under conditions that constitute cruel and unusual punishment, and has organized an illegal international witch-hunt to prevent Snowden from seeking asylum.

The treatment awaiting Snowden upon his capture was made clear in Carney’s characterization of the young whistleblower as a spy: “He is not a human

rights activist, he is not a dissident. He is accused of leaking classified information, he's been charged with three felony counts related to the leaking of classified information. And for those reasons he should be returned to the United States."

Carney also alluded to the possibility of canceling upcoming talks between President Obama and Russian President Vladimir Putin.

"The president intends to travel to Russia in September for the G-20 Summit, and I don't have any further announcements with regard to that travel," Carney said. When pressed on whether this should be taken as an indication of meeting cancellation plans, Carney said that he would speak no more on "previous announcements on presidential travel... I don't have anything to add."

For his part, Putin has responded to the American threats by leveling a threat of his own at Edward Snowden.

"We have warned Mr. Snowden that any actions by him connected with harming Russian-American relations are unacceptable," the Russian president said Wednesday. "Bilateral relations, in my opinion, are far more important than squabbles about the activities of the secret services."

These comments further show the Putin regime's hostility to Edward Snowden. To the Russian ruling class, anger over the US government's assault on democratic rights are mere "squabbles." In effect, Snowden's life will be weighed against the benefits and detriments that may come to the Russian ruling class in its relations with American imperialism.



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