

# US secretary of state threatens Venezuela over Snowden asylum

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A report published earlier this week by Spanish newspaper ABC details a series of heavy-handed threats leveled by US Secretary of State John Kerry against the government of Venezuela. The threats were made in an attempt to bully Venezuela out of granting asylum to whistleblower Edward Snowden.

ABC cites at least one source who was familiar with the content of a phone call made a week ago by Kerry to Venezuelan Foreign Minister Elías Jaua only hours after Venezuela announced that it had granted asylum to Snowden.

During the phone call, Kerry reportedly made the following threats:

To ground any and all Venezuelan airplanes flying in American or NATO airspace upon any suspicion that Snowden may be on board, including the flights of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro. “Immunity is for the president, not for the plane,” Kerry said.

To revoke US entry visas to Venezuelan citizens.

To bring criminal charges for drug trafficking, money laundering and other crimes against Venezuelan officials. The ABC source said that Kerry mentioned specific names of government officials against whom the US would press charges.

To immediately halt sales of US gas products to Venezuela. Venezuela purchases a half-million barrels of gasoline and 350,000 barrels of Methyl Tertiary Butyl Ether, a gasoline additive, from the US each month.

On Friday, US State Department deputy spokesperson Marie Harf acknowledged that Kerry and Jaua spoke last Friday, but denied as “completely false” the claim that Kerry made any threats.

“The Secretary made no reference in his conversation with Foreign Minister Jaua as to what our response would be if Venezuela were to assist Mr. Snowden or

receive him,” she said.

“Instead, Secretary Kerry conveyed to the Foreign Minister that Mr. Snowden is accused of serious criminal offenses and should be returned to the United States to face those charges if he were to come into Venezuelan jurisdiction.”

Harf then called into question her denial by issuing a threat of her own:

“Should Venezuela assist Mr. Snowden or receive him, we will consider what the appropriate response should be at that time.”

Such threats underscore the antidemocratic character of the Obama administration’s campaign to isolate, jail or kill Edward Snowden. Like members of a criminal syndicate, the secretaries and spokespersons of the Obama administration are willing to blackmail, bully, slander and intimidate anyone who dares stand in the way of silencing the young whistleblower.

There are seemingly no limits to what the US government is willing to do to secure the extradition or death of Snowden. It is not entirely clear how the US would respond if a Venezuela-bound commercial flight refused to land upon the administration’s insistence. Would the plane be shot from the sky?

The acts of the Obama administration are also illegal—in violation of the United Nations Charter, which according to Article 2(1) is “based on the principle of the sovereign equality of all its Members.”

Article 2(3) explains, “All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations.”

The US threats also reveal the dangers posed to Snowden by relying on the bourgeois nationalist regimes of Latin America, all of which are heavily

dependent on the US and susceptible to US pressure.

As recently as June 5, the day before the Snowden revelations were made public, Jaua was meeting with Kerry in Guatemala to discuss closer ties between US imperialism and the Venezuelan government. The meeting, which had been requested by Venezuela, was considered a success by both parties.

In a statement issued on June 12, six days after the first Snowden revelations were published, Venezuelan Embassy Chargé d’Affaires Calixto Ortega thanked Kerry and said that the meeting was a positive sign that the US and Venezuela are “on the right path for two brother countries and two political positions.”

That same day, the Venezuelan Embassy said that Ortega would meet with Assistant Secretary of State Roberta Jacobson “to establish an agenda in this new phase in relations between the countries.”

The statement continued: “Ortega said that he will discuss with Jacobson issues related to politics, culture, energy and finance ‘and all the things that two countries can discuss harmoniously.’”



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