

Snowden remains in airport as Russian officials send mixed messages

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Whistle-Blower Edward Snowden has been granted a certificate that will allow him to depart the Sheremetyevo Airport in Moscow, Russian authorities said yesterday. But later that day, officials also barred Snowden from leaving the transit zone under bureaucratic pretenses.

Snowden has been trapped in the transit zone for over a month because of efforts by the Obama administration to capture and jail the young whistle-blower. These attempts have included threatening phone calls and the forced grounding of the flight of Bolivian president Evo Morales.

But Snowden's status as an asylum seeker remains tenuous. Despite the entrance certificate, Snowden has not yet been granted temporary asylum, a deliberation process which authorities with the Russian Federal Migration Service (FMS) say may take three months.

For its part, the Russian government of President Vladimir Putin has refused to grant Snowden safe asylum unless he stops all "political activity." An official with the FMS said on Wednesday that once released from the airport, Snowden will "only be allowed to stay in places designated by Russian law enforcement agencies."

The Russian government's unwillingness to defend Snowden was made clear when he was denied exit out of the transit zone yesterday. Government officials turned Snowden back to the transit zone, ostensibly because he did not have his paperwork in order.

An anonymous FMS official said that "Snowden doesn't have a valid passport, and he needs a whole set of different papers to cross the border into Russia."

Snowden's lawyer, Anatoly Kucherna, told members of the press that Snowden would not be leaving the airport transit zone.

"The situation is not standard for Russia," Kucherna

said. "We have come across some bureaucracy. His documents are still being reviewed. Let's wait for some time and hope that the question will be resolved in the next few days."

After making a visit to Snowden's hotel room, Kucherna noted that Snowden's safety is "top priority." The Obama administration has made clear that it is capable of killing American citizens without a warrant or a trial, and Snowden's life is in no way secure so long as it remains in the hands of the Russian secret police.

Kucherna reported that he also delivered new clothes and a copy of Fyodor Dostoyevsky's "Crime and Punishment" to Snowden.

If Snowden's appeal is granted, Kucherna hinted that Snowden might decide to apply for permanent residency within Russia. If his application is denied, the attorney said that Snowden might appeal the decision in Russian court.

In either case, Snowden's future is less than certain. Whether he decides to remain in Russia or to attempt the voyage to one of the four Latin American countries that have indicated their willingness to consider granting him asylum, Snowden's life will remain in the hands of one or another bourgeois government which holds no desire to wage a principled defense of democratic rights.

This was reflected in a statement made by Bolivian President Evo Morales yesterday to those European countries who were complicit in forcing Morales' airplane to land in Vienna, Austria earlier this month.

"We accept the apology of the four countries as a first step because we want to continue with the relationship of respect between our countries, relations of complementarity and solidarity," Morales said in a statement directed at the governments of France, Spain,

Italy, and Portugal.

Morales also thanked imperialist-dominated organizations like the Organization of American States (OAS) and the United Nations for their handling of the events.

Snowden's safe passage to Latin America is far from assured. Last week, US Secretary of State John Kerry threatened the Venezuelan government, stating that the US would force any flight in US or NATO airspace to land if it suspected that Snowden was on board.

Kerry stated bluntly that the US would ground a flight even if it were carrying Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro. "Immunity is for the president, not for the plane," Kerry said.



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