

Edward Snowden gains temporary asylum in Russia

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At 3:30 PM local time on Thursday, Edward Snowden was allowed to leave the Moscow airport transit zone where he has been trapped for more than five weeks. Snowden has been granted temporary asylum by Russia and may be allowed to live there for at least a year.

Indicative of the serious danger to his physical safety posed by Washington's vindictive international vendetta against him, Snowden was moved to a secret location.

"Over the past eight weeks we have seen the Obama administration show no respect for international or domestic law, but in the end, the law is winning," Snowden said as he received the certificate granting asylum.

The asylum grant has, predictably, provoked denunciations and threats of reprisal from US officials. Snowden has become an international symbol of resistance to the all-pervasive surveillance state that has been established by the United States and other capitalist governments. As such, he is a source of enormous frustration and hatred within the US military-intelligence complex, the corporate-financial oligarchy, and their political front men in the government.

The Obama White House has targeted whistleblowers who expose government criminality to a greater extent than any previous administration, and Snowden has been at the center of this campaign. The decision to allow him to stay in Russia has been met with condemnation from the administration.

"We are extremely disappointed that the Russian Federation would take this step," said Jay Carney, White House press secretary. "Obviously, this is not a positive development." Carney suggested that the White House might cancel a scheduled trip to Moscow in retaliation.

"He is not a dissident," Carney insisted. "Mr. Snowden is not a whistle-blower. He's accused of leaking classified information. He has been charged with three felony counts, and he should be returned to the United States as soon as possible, where he will be accorded full due process and protections."

Carney felt it necessary to emphasize that Snowden would receive the due process protections that are guaranteed to all in the Bill of Rights. This is because it is well known that the Obama administration has already killed American citizens without due process and continues to claim extralegal targeted killing as a prerogative of the executive branch.

Lawmakers chimed in with denunciations of Snowden and the Russian government. "Russia has stabbed us in the back, and each day that Mr. Snowden is allowed to roam free is another twist of the knife," said Democratic Senator Charles Schumer of New York. Schumer called Snowden a "coward" and said he has "chosen to run."

Senator John McCain, Republican of Arizona, called the asylum grant "a slap in the face of all Americans" and said it was necessary to "fundamentally rethink" US-Russia relations.

"Edward Snowden is a fugitive who belongs in a United States courtroom, not a free man deserving of asylum in Russia," said Democratic Senator Robert Menendez of New Jersey. Menendez called the action "a setback to US-Russia relations," and said Snowden "will do great damage to US national security interests" and "aid terrorists."

Senator Tom Coburn, Republican of Oklahoma, said that Snowden was a "traitor to our country."

While it has granted temporary asylum, the regime of Russian President Vladimir Putin has repeatedly said it does not want Snowden to get in the way of smooth

relations with the US. Yuri V. Ushakov, an aide to Putin, said the Snowden affair was of an “insignificant character.”

Putin has stated that asylum for Snowden will depend on his ending all political activity. “He has to stop his work aimed at damaging our US partners,” Putin has insisted.

Snowden’s life remains in danger. The US government has left no room for doubt: enemies of the state can and will be terminated without legal niceties. Whether Snowden is allowed to live or targeted for assassination is, for top US officials, a matter of political tactics.

The latest information on spying operations to emerge from the Snowden affair has been exceptionally significant and damning. The day before news of the asylum broke, the *Guardian* published another Snowden-leaked report detailing the NSA’s “widest-reaching” internet spying operation, known as XKeyscore, which involves dragnet internet surveillance and the reading of the contents of individual emails, among other functions.

According to CNN.com, XKeyscore “makes available everything you’ve ever done on the Internet—browsing history, searches, content of your emails, online chats, even your metadata—all at the tap of the keyboard...The program gives analysts the ability to search through the entire database of your information without any prior authorization—no warrant, no court clearance, no signature on a dotted line. An analyst must simply complete a simple onscreen form, and seconds later, your online history is no longer private.”

While US officials, from Obama himself to numerous congressmen and senators, have asserted that the surveillance “does not target Americans,” XKeyscore gives government analysts the capacity to search everyone’s data virtually at will.



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