Snowden permitted to stay in Russia for three more years

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9 August 2014

Edward Snowden has been granted a three-year extension of his authorization to remain in Russia, according to statements made by his attorney on Thursday. Snowden was approved to remain in Russia through August 2017. The NSA whistleblower has yet to receive official political asylum, which would enable him to remain in the country on a permanent basis.

The extension of Snowden's residency in Russia is undoubtedly bound up with growing tensions between Washington and Moscow, coming on the same day that Russia announced a one-year ban on imports of meat, produce and milk from the US, the EU, Norway, Australia and Canada, in response to sanctions imposed by the US and European powers.

Snowden has faced numerous threats against his life from top US officials and media pundits, since he began releasing classified documents detailing surveillance programs run by the National Security Agency (NSA) and is currently paying for private guards out of his own pocket.

The decision of the Russian government to continue hosting Snowden is a major embarrassment for the US ruling elite, which has sought relentlessly to seize the former NSA contractor.

Snowden's lawyer, Anatoly Hucherena, told the *Washington Post* that US officials have contacted him repeatedly with demands that Snowden be sent back to the US, with US ambassador to Russia Michael McFaul playing the leading role in these efforts.

"I got many calls from McFaul and his advisers," Kucherena said. "They asked me many times: 'Please send him back to the United States.' "

Ned Price of the US National Security Council demanded in a public statement this week that Snowden return to face trial in the US. "Mr. Snowden faces felony charges here in the United States. He should return to the U.S. as soon as possible," Price said.

An editorial published Thursday by the *Wall Street Journal*, "Safe in Putin's Arms," continued the longstanding slander campaign against Snowden, accusing him of "betraying his country" and portraying the whistleblower as a tool of the Russian government. "Mr. Snowden is one of President Putin's weapons to deploy against the US," the *Journal* wrote.

"Compromising US security isn't his sole achievement since going rogue at the NSA. Mr. Snowden has also sold himself as a noble whistleblower to the more naive in the West's media and political classes. And all while he has enjoyed the protection of one of the world's most dangerous tyrants, whose military assault on Ukraine may bring on a wider European war," the *Journal* wrote.

The editorial board at the *Journal* here displayed its limitless capacity for distortion and falsification in service of the US financial elite.

In reality, far from being a tool of Putin, Snowden refused Putin's initial asylum offer because it was conditional upon him ceasing to release documents exposing the illegal mass spying programs of the US government. The NSA whistleblower spent three weeks stranded in Moscow Airport during summer of 2013 after his passport was revoked by US government. He decided to remain in Russia only after some 20 other governments refused his requests for political asylum, leaving him nowhere else to turn.

Moreover, it is US and German imperialism that have waged a military assault against Ukraine, backing the neo-fascist proxy forces that overthrew the government of Viktor Yanukovych and subsequently coordinating the murderous campaign of the Poroshenko regime against pro-Russian separatists and the civilian

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population of Eastern Ukraine.

In drawing a connection between the Snowden affair and the crisis in Ukraine, however, the *Journal*'s editorial board nonetheless inadvertently highlighted the underlying connection between the US ruling elite's efforts to discredit and destroy Snowden and the predatory agenda of US imperialism. The surveillance operations revealed by Snowden are directed against populations and governments around the world as part of the drive of the American government to maintain worldwide political domination, using military force, on behalf of the big banks and transnational corporations.

Figures like Snowden, who was previously employed by the US security apparatus but has become a symbol of widespread popular hostility to the flagrantly unconstitutional mass spying operations of the NSA, represent a real threat to the military and political aims of the US. This explains the endless efforts to demonize Snowden and to deny him any safe haven.

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