

Washington v. Edward Snowden: The “Russia -China Connection”

By [Stephen Lendman](#)

Theme: [Intelligence](#)

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Events are fast-moving. On June 23, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region’s (HKSAR) [press release](#) said:

“Mr Edward Snowden left Hong Kong today (June 23) on his own accord for a third country through a lawful and normal channel.”

“The US Government earlier on made a request to the HKSAR Government for the issue of a provisional warrant of arrest against Mr Snowden.”

“Since the documents provided by the US Government did not fully comply with the legal requirements under Hong Kong law, the HKSAR Government has requested the US Government to provide additional information so that the Department of Justice could consider whether the US Government’s request can meet the relevant legal conditions.”

“As the HKSAR Government has yet to have sufficient information to process the request for provisional warrant of arrest, there is no legal basis to restrict Mr. Snowden from leaving Hong Kong.”

“The HKSAR Government has already informed the US Government of Mr. Snowden’s departure.”

“Meanwhile, the HKSAR Government has formally written to the US Government requesting clarification on earlier reports about the hacking of computer systems in Hong Kong by US government agencies.”

“The HKSAR Government will continue to follow up on the matter so as to protect the legal rights of the people of Hong Kong.”

According to The [New York Times](#):

“A Moscow-based reservations agent at Aeroflot, Russia’s national airline, said that Mr. Snowden was aboard flight SU213 to Moscow, with a scheduled arrival there a little after 5 p.m. Moscow time. The reservations agent said that Mr. Snowden was traveling on a one-way ticket to Moscow.”

On June 23, the [South China Morning Post \(SCMP\)](#) headlined “[SNOWDEN LEAVES HONG KONG ON COMMERCIAL FLIGHT TO MOSCOW.](#)”

“He left Hong Kong on his own will.” He arrived at 5:15PM local time. It’s not his final destination. He’ll continue to an unnamed country.

WikiLeaks helped Snowden secure political asylum in a “democratic country.” It arranged travel papers and “safe exit from Hong Kong.”

WikiLeaks legal advisors accompanied him. A Moscow-based reservations agent said he traveled with someone identified only as Harrison.

Russia’s Beijing embassy neither confirmed or denied his departure heading for Moscow. Vladimir Putin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said he doesn’t know his plans.

If he seeks asylum, he added, “(t)here is a procedure, and it will be applied. If there is an application it is going to be considered. If there is no application, we will do what is prescribed by law.”

Carnegie Moscow Center director [Dmitri Trenin](#) believes Snowden will stay in Russia. “I don’t think there is any other country that would stand up to US pressure, which will be tremendous, he said.

“The Chinese don’t want to spoil their relationship with the United States. Russia is sometimes embracing conflict with the US.”

“Russia is turning into a haven – virtually, intellectually and physically – for those who have an ax to grind with the West, who are whistle-blowers or have problems with Western authorities,” he added.

“It’s the only country in the world that at this point can afford it, or thinks it can afford it.”

If Snowden continues to another country, Russia will be centrally involved in aiding his flight from prosecution.

“The minute Aeroflot got the information that a certain person by the name of Snowden is about to buy a ticket, this information would be immediately transferred to the quote-unquote competent authorities,” said Trenin.

“It would be a political decision to give him a ticket or deny him a ticket.” Russia’s very supportive. Whether he stays or leaves remains to be seen.

The [Financial Times](#) cited Itar Tass saying he’ll fly from Moscow to Havana en route to Venezuela. FT said another possibility is he’ll seek asylum in Russia.

On arrival at Moscow’s Sheremetyevo Airport, Ecuadorian embassy staff met him. So did its Russian ambassador Patricio Chavez. Russia Today said a doctor embassy officials dispatched examined him.

Ecuador’s Foreign Minister Ricardo Patino confirmed via twitter that Snowden applied for asylum.

Julian Assange told Australia’s Sydney Morning Herald he’d be met by “diplomats from the country that will be his ultimate destination.” They’ll accompany him to his journey’s end.

Ecuador granted Assange asylum. It did so last August. It’s short of freedom to leave Britain unarrested. He’s been holed up in its London embassy.

It's likely Ecuador would treat Snowden like Assange. Ahead of granting him asylum last summer, President Raphael Correa tweeted "No one is going to terrorize us" to do otherwise.

On June 23, the [South China Morning Post](#) (SCMP) headlined "EXCLUSIVE: US spies on Chinese mobile phone companies, steals SMS data: Edward Snowden."

He said Washington's "stealing millions of text messages." He has evidence proving it.

"Text messaging is the most preferred communication tool in mainland China, used widely by ordinary people and government officials from formal work exchanges to small chats."

"Government data show that the Chinese exchanged almost 900 billion text messages in 2012."

China Mobile's the world's largest cell network operator. Through May it had 735 million subscribers. Number two China Unicom has 258 million users. China Telecom is third largest. It has 172 million customers.

Fang Binxing is the Principle of Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications. He's called the father of China's "Great Firewall."

Last October, he called foreign equipment a serious national security threat, saying:

"China should set up a national information security review commission as soon as possible."

At issue is known US spying. Britain's Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) operates the same way. It's secret Tempora program accesses fiber optic cables.

They carry vast amounts of Internet and communications data. GCHQ's "Mastering the Internet" initiative spies online. It does so intensively. The agency works closely with NSA. Information learned is jointly shared.

American, other Western, and Israeli technology companies work cooperatively with Washington. Chinese telecom companies began replacing foreign equipment. Changes are proceeding quietly.

On June 23, [SCMP](#) published another "EXCLUSIVE: NSA targeted China's Tsinghua University in extensive hacking attacks, says Snowden."

It's China's "top education and research institute." NSA targets it intensively. In one day last January, "at least 63 computers and servers" were hacked.

Snowden provided evidence of "external and internal internet protocol addresses. (They) could only have been obtained by hacking or with physical access to the computers."

"The university is home to one of the mainland's six major backbone networks, the China Education and Research Network (CERNET) from where internet data from millions of Chinese citizens could be mined."

“The network was the country’s first internet backbone network and has evolved into the world’s largest national research hub.”

“It is one of the mainland’s non-commercial networks, owned by the Ministry of Education, but operated and maintained by the university and other colleges.”

Snowden said NSA focuses on so-called “network backbones.” Vast amounts of data pass through them.

Following his revelations, China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs “set up an office to deal with diplomatic activities involving cybersecurity.”

It’s the first of its kind on the mainland. A Foreign Ministry spokeswoman said Beijing will discuss cybersecurity issues with Washington. They’ll occur during July’s Sino-US strategic and security dialogue.

[SCMP](#) said “China calls US the world’s ‘biggest villain’ for IT espionage.

Xinhua is China’s official press agency. It called new and previous allegations “clearly troubling signs.”

“They demonstrate that the United States, which has long been trying to play innocent as a victim of cyberattacks, has turned out to be the biggest villain in our age.”

Before Washington accuses other countries, it “should come clean about its record first.”

“It owes too an explanation to China and other countries it has allegedly spied on. It has to share with the world the range, extent and intent of its clandestine hacking programmes.”

“The ball is now in Washington’s court. The US government had better move to allay the concerns of other countries.”

A Final Comment

Snowden’s targeted for doing the right thing. He exposed US wrongdoing. He did so responsibly, legally, and at great risk. He sacrificed financial security and potential freedom. He deserves praise, not prosecution.

Charging him with Espionage Act violations reflects rogue state governance writ large. The law’s long ago outdated. It’s grossly misused.

It’s unrelated to Snowden’s revelations. It pertains to aiding America’s enemies. It concerns interfering with military operations during a time of war. It was enacted during WW I.

It’s about disclosing classified secrets “with intent or reason to believe that the information is to be used to the injury of the United States, or to the advantage of any foreign nation.”

Snowden didn’t harm national security. He didn’t commit espionage. He exposed it. Global US spying/hacking revelations reflect massive, intrusive lawlessness.

Americans are unconstitutionally spied on. Foreign government statutes are violated. Snowden provided a vital service. He revealed what everyone needs to know.

It's the only chance to stop it. Snowden risked everything to try. He's arguably the most important whistleblower of our time. Perhaps ever.

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