

Federation Council Invites Snowden to Investigate Spying Claims

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Russia's parliament has extended an invitation to fugitive ex-CIA employee Edward Snowden to help investigate whether U.S. Internet firms provided information about Russian citizens to the U.S. government.

Snowden, a former contractor for the National Security Agency, is wanted by the U.S. for disclosing a top-secret surveillance program that allegedly targeted millions of Americans. He is reportedly in Moscow.

"We invite Edward Snowden to work with us and hope that as soon as he settles his legal status, he will collaborate with our working group and provide us with proof of U.S. intelligences agencies' access to the servers of Internet firms," Senator Ruslan Gattarov said Thursday, a day after Russia's upper house of parliament, the Federation Council, decided to set up a special working group to investigate Snowden's claims.

Gattarov, appointed to lead the group, told RIA-Novosti that it would incorporate legislators, diplomats, prosecutors and communications officials. Preliminary results of the investigation should be made public in October.

Meanwhile, a member of President Vladimir Putin's Human Rights Council, Kirill Kabanov, has said he asked his colleagues to consider asking the government to grant political asylum to Snowden. The council's chairman, Mikhail Fedotov, said the request would be considered and put to a vote.

President Barack Obama said Thursday that the U.S. would not engage in "wheeling and dealing" to win Snowden's extradition.

Senior U.S. lawmakers, however, seem more inclined to force the issue.

Senator Lindsey Graham, a Republican from South Carolina, said that he is preparing a package of measures to pressure Russia to assist the U.S. in securing the detention of Snowden.

"We are exploring what are the leverage points. I'm trying to put together a package to let the Russians know how serious we are," Graham told The Daily Beast Thursday. "We have to respond, this is a defining moment in the relationship."

Graham declined to elaborate on what measures he and his colleagues might pursue, though he accused Russia of ignoring the rule of law both domestically and abroad, adding that Putin is "trying to recreate the old Soviet Union attitude and image."

Snowden himself apparently remains in limbo at Moscow's Sheremetyevo Airport, where Putin said he had been waiting in the transit area since his arrival on Sunday. He had been expected to fly to Havana on Monday en route to Ecuador, where he has asked for asylum, but witnesses said the flight left without any sign of him on board.

An immigration official said Snowden had not applied for a visa to enter Russia and that he could remain in the transit area "as long as he wants" without applying for a transit visa.

In the Ecuadorean capital of Quito, the government said it had not processed Snowden's asylum request because he had not reached any of its diplomatic premises.

Bristling at suggestions that Quito was weighing the pros and cons of Snowden's case in terms of its own interests, officials also said Ecuador would waive its preferential trade rights under a soon-to-expire treaty with the U.S.

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