

Russia Shows Growing Impatience Over Snowden's Airport Stay

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Edward Snowden should find another country to seek refuge, a Russian official said Thursday, signaling Moscow's growing impatience over the former U.S. spy agency contractor's lengthening stay at a Moscow airport.

Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said that Russia had received no request for political asylum from Snowden and that he had to solve his problems himself after 11 days in the transit area of Moscow's Sheremetyevo Airport.

President Vladimir Putin has refused to extradite the American, and Russian officials have delighted in his success in staying out of the United States' clutches since revealing details of secret U.S. government surveillance programs.

But Moscow has also made clear that Snowden is an increasingly unwelcome guest because the longer he stays, the greater the risk of the diplomatic standoff over his fate causing lasting

damage to relations with Washington.

"He needs to choose a place to go," Ryabkov said in an interview. "As of this moment, we do not have a formal application from Mr. Snowden asking for asylum in the Russian Federation."

Ryabkov told Itar-Tass separately that Russia "cannot solve anything for him," and the situation should now be resolved "one way or the other."

His remarks echoed comments by Putin, who has urged Snowden, 30, to leave as soon as he can.

Relations between Snowden and the Russian authorities appear to have soured when Putin said on Monday that Snowden could be granted asylum by Moscow only if he agreed to stop actions that could harm the U.S.

Putin's press secretary, Dmitry Peskov, said Tuesday that Snowden had withdrawn his interest in asylum in Russia after Putin spelled out the terms. His options have narrowed further since then as no country has agreed to grant him asylum.

Russian officials have kept Snowden at arm's length since he landed from Hong Kong on June 23, saying the transit area where passengers stay between flights is neutral territory and he will be on Russian soil only if he goes through passport control.

Moscow has also done nothing to trumpet his presence or parade him before cameras, and Putin has avoided the temptation to mock Obama when asked about the affair in public. He said last week that he would prefer not to deal with it at all.

Relations with Washington have been strained since Putin's return to the presidency last year. He has accused the U.S. of backing protesters demanding his removal, and Washington is worried that he is cracking down on dissent.

But there have been signs of an improvement as the sides try to cooperate more on security since the April 15 Boston Marathon bombings, in which two ethnic Chechens are the main suspects. The U.S. has also shown some restraint in its remarks.

"We continue to talk with the Russian government every day [about Snowden], absolutely every day, including myself," U.S. ambassador Michael McFaul told reporters. "We hope to resolve this ... in a way that we want to have it ended, and so far we're very happy with our interactions with the Russian government."

An Interfax report underlined Washington's own determination to keep ties on an even keel, quoting an unnamed source as saying Snowden's case had not been raised by U.S. Justice Department officials at recent talks in Moscow.

Russia has, however, reveled in the diplomatic fallout since Bolivian President Evo Morales, a Putin ally, was held up on his way home from an energy meeting in Moscow because a number of European countries refused initially to let his plane into their airspace over suspicions that Snowden was on board.

Bolivia blamed the delays on Washington, and the Russian Foreign Ministry criticized three European Union member states.

"The actions of the authorities of France, Spain and Portugal could hardly be considered friendly actions toward Bolivia," it said. "Russia calls on the international community to comply strictly with international legal principles."

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