The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Snowden's Father Thanks Russia for Protecting His Son

By The Moscow Times

July 31, 2013



The father of fugitive former National Security Agency (NSA) contractor Edward Snowden has thanked President Vladimir Putin and Russia for helping his son, in a first interview with the Russian media aired Wednesday.

Lonnie Snowden told state-owned Rossia 24 television he was grateful to Putin and the Russian government for their "courage" and "strength" in protecting his son, who has been holed up in Moscow's Sheremetyevo Airport since arriving from Hong Kong on June 23.

He said FBI officials had previously asked him to fly to Moscow to see his son a few weeks ago, but he declined. He said in remarks translated into Russian that he might still decide to go to Moscow to meet his son.

Edward Snowden, who is wanted by the U.S. for leaking classified data about the NSA's intelligence gathering operations, requested temporary asylum in Russia earlier this month.

Russian officials have not yet issued him with a document that would allow him to leave the airport's transit zone.

Russian lawyer Anatoly Kucherena, who is assisting Snowden's asylum request, said in an interview broadcast Wednesday that he planned to send an invitation to Snowden's father to support his visa application.

"I will do my best to do this today," Kucherena told Vesti FM radio station, a sister outlet of Rossia 24. No particular date has yet been set for Lonnie Snowden's visit, he said.

Kucherena also said it was still unclear when Russian officials would issue documents for Edward Snowden, adding it should happen in the next few days.

Lonnie Snowden said in his interview that his son should stay where it is safe for him.

"I hope to see you soon. But most of all I want you to be safe," he said. "I hope you are watching this. ... Your family is well. We love you," he added.

He reiterated that he did not expect that his son would have a fair trial if he returns to the U.S.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2013/07/31/snowdens-father-thanks-russia-for-protecting-his-son-a26339