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Snowden Got Stuck in Russia After Cuba Blocked Entry, Report Says

By The Moscow Times

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Former U.S. spy agency contractor Edward Snowden got stuck in the transit zone of a Moscow airport because Havana said it would not let him fly from Russia to Cuba, a news report said Monday.

Snowden, who is wanted in the United States for leaking details of U.S. government surveillance programs, had planned to fly to Havana from Moscow's Sheremetyevo airport a day after arriving from Hong Kong on June 23.

But Snowden, who eventually accepted a year's asylum in Russia after spending nearly six weeks at Sheremetyevo, did not show up for the flight although he had been allocated a seat.

Citing several sources, including one close to the U.S. State Department, Kommersant said the reason was that at the last minute Cuba told officials to stop Snowden from boarding the Aeroflot flight.

It said Cuba had changed its mind after pressure by the U.S., which wants to try Snowden on espionage charges.

Kommersant also said Snowden had spent a couple of days in the Russian consulate in Hong Kong to declare his intention of flying to Latin America via Moscow.

"His choice of route and his plea to help were a complete surprise to us. We did not invite him," Kommersant quoted a Russian state source as saying.

The report could not immediately be verified. Allowing Snowden to land would have put Cuba's relations with the U.S. at risk.

Ties between the U.S. and Russia were strained when Moscow granted Snowden asylum. Following the disagreement over Snowden, U.S. President Barack Obama postponed a meeting with President Vladimir Putin planned for next month.

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