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Snowden's Father and U.S. Lawyer Part Ways

By Andrew McChesney

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Lon Snowden, pictured on state television, says he remains in the U.S. while his son "is enjoying legal asylum in Russia."

The father of U.S. intelligence leaker Edward Snowden and his U.S. lawyer confirmed Friday that they have parted ways amid a difference of opinion.

Each side insisted that it had severed ties with the other first, but they also wished each other well.

U.S. lawyer Bruce Fein dropped Lon Snowden for "continually forfeiting the attorney-client privilege in communication, which Mr. Fein believes jeopardized Ed [Snowden] and his case," said Mattie Fein, Bruce Fein's wife and partner in their law firm.

“At 12:30 yesterday afternoon Mr. Snowden was sent a letter notifying him that the firm was no longer representing him,” Mattie Fein said by telephone from Virginia.

But Lon Snowden, in an e-mail to The Moscow Times, said he chose to part ways with his lawyer after Mattie Fein made comments to the media that "completely misrepresented" his position.

"As a result, my trust in the firm was greatly diminished, and I soon forbade them to be involved in any aspect of planning or communications regarding possible travel to Russia," Lon Snowden said.

Mattie Fein countered that her law firm had yet to receive a phone call or e-mail from Lon Snowden in which he terminated their relationship.

Lon Snowden had planned to make a trip to Moscow to see his son, who last month was granted temporary asylum in Russia for one year, together with the Feins. But he confirmed by e-mail that he had called off the visit, citing security concerns.

"No decisions have been made, or actions taken, that could jeopardize the legal situation of Edward Snowden," he said. "I'm still in the United States, and he is enjoying legal asylum in Russia."

U.S. authorities had sought to extradite Edward Snowden, a former contractor for the U.S. National Security Agency whose interests are represented by Russian lawyer Anatoly Kucherena, to face charges of leaking information about the agency's global electronic surveillance program.

Despite the end of the relationship with Fein, Lon Snowden said he had no hard feelings. "I remain thankful for Mr. Fein's assistance and counsel over the past few months and wish him well in his future endeavors," he said.

Mattie Fein said the sentiment was mutual. “The most important thing is that at some point he gets over there to see his son,” she said. “The Feins wish Lon and his family well and a safe trip to be reunited with his son.”

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