The Moscow Times
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4 Americans Meet With Snowden as His Father Arrives

By The Moscow Times

October 10, 2013

Lon Snowden **Alexander Zemlianichenko**

Four former U.S. officials who met with fugitive U.S. intelligence leaker Edward Snowden on Wednesday said he had no regrets about releasing classified information.

The group, comprised of people who formerly worked for the CIA, FBI, Justice Department and NSA, announced the meeting with Snowden on Thursday. They said they'd met with the fugitive at a secret location a day earlier to present him with the Sam Adams Award for Integrity in Intelligence, The Associated Press reported.

"He spoke about going out and about and getting to understand Russia and its culture and the people," said Thomas Drake, a former NSA executive who provided a newspaper with inside information about an electronic espionage program.

The four were the first to meet with Snowden since he was granted asylum in Russia in

August, and they refused to say where they met with him or where he is living.

"For his own safety it's best that no one else knows where he actually lives," Drake said, The Associated Press reported.

Drake and the other former officials — Raymond McGovern, Jesselyn Radack and Coleen Rowley — said they saw no reason to believe that Snowden was under the control of Russia's security services, as many have speculated.

The group's visit came a day before Snowden's father arrived in Moscow for a long-awaited meeting with his son.

The plane carrying Lon Snowden arrived at Sheremetyevo Airport at 7:50 a.m on Thursday, television channel Rossia 24 reported.

Upon his arrival at the airport, Lon Snowden said he believed Russia was the safest place for his son, echoing earlier comments in which he thanked President Vladimir Putin for taking the fugitive in.

“I think that my son will stay in Russia, although I haven't spoken to him yet,” he told Rossia 24, adding that he planned to visit Russia again in the future and would be satisfied if his son decided to live in the country permanently.

He did not immediately reply to messages sent to his two personal e-mail accounts Thursday.

In an e-mail to The Moscow Times on Sept. 27, Lon Snowden said he had called off a planned visit due to security concerns.

Edward Snowden's lawyer, Anatoly Kucherena, who met Lon Snowden at the airport, said Thursday that five vehicles had been following Lon Snowden's car after he arrived in Moscow, Interfax reported.

“The only thing he could be thinking about right now, and those of us who are with him, is security. While we were driving here, about five cars were following us. What do you do in a situation like that?” Kucherena said.

“I understand there is a lot of interest, but I would ask that attention be paid to Edward's safety,” Kucherena said.

Edward and Lon Snowden have been in touch only once since Edward Snowden fled the U.S. in fear of prosecution in May, speaking by encrypted video chat on Aug. 15 against the advice of their lawyers, Kucherena told Russian news agencies.

The father's visit has been in the making since Aug. 11, when Lon Snowden announced he had been granted a Russian visa during an appearance on ABC News.

The former NSA intelligence contractor is wanted in the U.S. on charges of espionage and theft of government property for disclosing the existence of classified mass surveillance programs run by the NSA.

Also see:

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

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