

Russia Is the Safest Place for U.S. Leaker Snowden, Lawyer Says

By [Anna Dolgov](#)

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Edward Snowden speaks about privacy and technology with the ACLU's Ben Wizner and Christopher Soghoian at SXSW Interactive.

Edward Snowden did not seek out a move to Moscow but Russia is the safest place for him to be right now, his lawyer said as the U.S. leaker's temporary visa expires Thursday.

Snowden "did not voluntarily go to Moscow," his lawyer Jesselyn Radack said Wednesday in an interview with ABC.

"He was ticketed to fly to Latin America and had to go through the transit zone in Moscow during a layover and at that point the US revoked his passport, effectively stranding him there. So Moscow was not of his choosing."

However, now that he is in Russia, "he is in the safest place that he can be," Radack told ABC.

Radack's comments came a day after a German minister said Snowden's lawyers were in talks

with U.S. officials over the possibility of his returning home, and a leftist German politician urged Western governments to offer Snowden an alternative to seeking refuge from a "despotic" Russian leader.

Snowden's one-year temporary asylum in Russia expires Thursday, and an official close to the country's Federal Migration Service has reportedly said Moscow is likely to extend his status, though this has yet to be officially confirmed.

Prominent Russian human rights activist Svetlana Gannushkina said Moscow had likely extended Snowden's stay, Interfax reported Thursday.

"None of his circumstances have changed — the United States have not dropped his prosecution, he has not been declared a national hero there," she told Interfax. "Nothing has happened that could have persuaded our authorities to decline him an extension of asylum."

Konstantin Romodanovsky, the head of the Russian Federal Migration Service, refused last week to disclose whether Snowden's status would be renewed, saying that "if Mr. Snowden wishes, he will be able to tell you," Interfax reported.

German Justice Minister Heiko Maas suggested in an interview with the dpa news agency earlier this week that the best deal for Snowden would be to go back to the U.S., adding that the leaker's lawyers were negotiating with U.S. officials over the possibility of his return home, Maas said, Deutsche Welle reported.

"He is only in his early thirties and would definitely not want to spend the rest of his life being chased around the world or applying for one asylum after another," Maas was quoted as saying.

Meanwhile, Green party lawmaker and a member of the German National Security Agency inquiry committee, Konstantin von Notz, accused the German government of "behaving very cynically" by failing to provide Snowden with a better option than seeking asylum in Russia, Deutsche Welle reported.

"It is a disgrace for the western democracies — for Germany but also for the US — that someone like Snowden needs to be taken in by a despotic ruler like [Russian President] Vladimir Putin, because he cannot get refuge in Germany or in the U.S.," Von Notz was quoted as saying.

The German branch of the Reporters Without Borders press freedom watchdog also urged the German government to "guarantee Snowden safe residence in Germany," European news agency EurActiv reported.

Snowden has to live "in a country like Russia that tramples on press freedom and that intercepts telephone calls and internet among its own citizens under the spy program SORM," Michael Rediske, the organization's spokesman, was quoted as saying by EurActiv.

SORM, which stands for System of Operative- Investigative Measures, was supposedly designed by Russia as an anti-terror surveillance measure, and reportedly is able to capture full recordings of calls, emails and online messages.

See also:

[Edward Snowden's Lawyer Confirms NSA Leaker Wants To Stay in Russia](https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2014/07/31/russia-is-the-safest-place-for-us-leaker-snowden-lawyer-says-a37857)

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