

U.S. Whistleblower Edward Snowden Allowed to Stay in Russia for 'a Couple More Years'

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AP

U.S. surveillance whistleblower Edward Snowden has been given permission to stay in Russia for several more years, Russia's Foreign Ministry announced Wednesday.

Snowden was granted asylum in Russia in August 2013 after exposing mass-surveillance carried out by U.S. intelligence agencies on American citizens.

Writing on her Facebook page, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova lashed out at former CIA deputy chief, Michael Morell, who had previously suggested that Moscow should return Snowden to the United States to build better ties with Washington before the inauguration of President-elect Donald Trump.

“According to media reports, the former deputy head of the CIA, Michael Morell, has suggested that Russia should 'make a gift' of former U.S. intelligence service employee

Edward Snowden in honor of Donald Trump's inauguration,” Zakharova wrote.

“There's something strange about all of these 'former' [intelligence service employees.] A former British spy served up some nonsense about the U.S. president. And it's not the first time that we've seen some extremely hateful statements from the United States: not so long ago, the very same Morrell was urging to Russians in Syria to be killed.

“The funny thing is that this is the former deputy head of the CIA! And yet he does not know that Snowden has just had his Russian residence permit extended for another couple of years.

“But seriously, what this CIA-man is proposing is an ideology of betrayal. You've shown your true colors, Mr. Morell, and all now it's clear that it is perfectly normal for your office to present people seeking protection as 'gifts.'

“You do not understand Russia, Michael Morell.”

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Morell, who also served as the acting CIA director between Nov. 9 2012 and March 8, 2013, said that the Kremlin should return Snowden to Moscow [in an article for The Cipher Brief](#).

In the piece, he said he that considered Snowden to be a “traitor,” but wanted to see him judged before a U.S. court.

“I'm willing to allow our judicial system to decide whether Snowden is a hero for bringing to the public's attention a program that indeed posed risks to civil liberties — but actually never violated any — or whether he is a traitor for broadly exposing national security secrets,” he wrote.

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