OMNI SNOWDEN NEWSLETTER #2, November 1, 2013. Compiled by Dick Bennett for a Culture of Peace and Justice. (#1 July 9, 2013)

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http://jamesrichardbennett.blogspot.com/

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1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
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Edward Snowden Letter to German Government in Full
To whom it may concern,

I have been invited to write to you regarding your investigation of mass surveillance.

I am Edward Joseph Snowden, formerly employed through contracts or direct hire as a technical expert for the United States National Security Agency, Central Intelligence Agency, and Defense Intelligence Agency.

In the course of my service to these organizations, I believe I witnessed systemic violations of law by my government that created a moral duty to act. As a result of reporting these concerns, I have face a severe and sustained campaign of persecution that forced me from my family and home. I am currently living in exile under a grant of temporary asylum in the Russian Federation in accordance with international law.

I am heartened by the response to my act of political expression, in both the United States and beyond. Citizens around the world as well as high officials – including in the United States – have judged the revelation of an unaccountable system of pervasive surveillance to be a public service. These spying revelations have resulted in the proposal of many new laws and policies to address formerly concealed abuses of the public trust. The benefits to society of this growing knowledge are becoming increasingly clear at the same time claimed risks are being shown to have been mitigated.

Though the outcome of my efforts has been demonstrably positive, my government continues to treat dissent as defection, and seeks to criminalize political speech with felony charges that provide no defense. However, speaking the truth is not a crime. I am confident that with the support of the international community, the government of the United States will abandon this harmful behavior. I hope that when the difficulties of this humanitarian situation have been resolved, I will be able to cooperate in the responsible finding of fact regarding reports in the media, particularly in regard to the truth and authenticity of documents, as appropriate and in accordance with the law.

I look forward to speaking with you in your country when the situation is resolved, and thank you for your efforts in upholding the international laws that protect us all.

With my best regards,

Edward Snowden
31 October 2013


Amy Goodman, Video Interview: For the first time in months, the
National Security Agency whistleblower Edward Snowden has appeared on video speaking in Moscow. He warned about “dragnet mass surveillance that puts entire populations under sort of an eye that sees everything even when it’s not needed.” Snowden’s remarks were made after four American whistleblowers traveled to Russia to give him the Integrity Award from the Sam Adams Associates for Integrity in Intelligence.


Snowden statement to European Parliament on civil rights

From David Druding

YouTube - Videos from this email

http://youtu.be/G_syFFvefh0
Edward Snowden’s Brave Integrity
October 15, 2013

Exclusive: President Obama says he welcomes the debate on post-9/11 surveillance of Americans and the world, but that debate was only made meaningful by the disclosures of NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden, who was then indicted and sought asylum in Russia, where he just met with some ex-U.S. intelligence officials, including Ray McGovern.

By Ray McGovern

I’ve had a couple of days to reflect after arriving back from Moscow where my whistleblower colleagues Coleen Rowley, Jesselyn Radack, Tom Drake and I formally presented former National Security Agency contractor Edward Snowden with the annual Sam Adams Associates award for integrity in intelligence.

The thought that companioned me the entire time was the constant admonition of my Irish grandmother: “Show me your company, and I’ll tell you who you are!” I cannot remember ever feeling so honored as I did by the company I kept over the past week.

That includes, of course, Snowden himself, WikiLeaks journalist Sarah Harrison (and “remotely” Julian Assange) who, together with Russian civil rights lawyer Anatoly Kucherena, helped arrange the visit, and – last but not least – the 3,000 Internet transparency/privacy activists at OHM2013 near Amsterdam, whom Tom, Jesselyn, Coleen and I addressed in early August and who decided to crowd-source our travel. (See: “In the Whistleblower Chalet” by Silkie Carlo; http://motherboard.vice.com/blog/in-the-whistleblower-chalet)

As representatives of Sam Adams Associates for Integrity in Intelligence, we were in Moscow last Wednesday not only to honor Snowden with the award for integrity, but also to remind him (and ourselves) that we all stand on the shoulders of patriots who have gone before and pointed the way.

Because of speaking commitments he could not break, Pentagon Papers truth-teller Dan Ellsberg, whom Henry Kissinger called “the most dangerous man in America” and who in 1971 was vilified as acidly as Ed Snowden is being vilified now, could be with us only in spirit. He did send along with us for Ed the video of the award-winning documentary that uses Kissinger’s epithet as its title, together with Dan’s book Secrets, in which he had inscribed a very thoughtful note.

Ellsberg’s note thanked Snowden for his adroit – and already partially successful – attempt to thwart
what Snowden has called “turnkey tyranny,” that is the terrifying prospect of a surveillance-driven government tyranny ready to go with the simple turn of a key.

Two at our table – Ed Snowden and Tom Drake – enjoy with Dan the dubious distinction of having been charged with espionage under the draconian Espionage Act of 1917 that is so much favored by the administration of President Barack Obama and other zealous protectors of the national security state and its multitude of secrets.

Call me naïve, but I had no sense that I was cavorting with treasonous criminals. Rather, it seemed crystal clear that Ed Snowden is simply the current embodiment of people so castigated when they feel compelled to speak out, as Ed did, against gross violations of the Fourth Amendment.

Compelled? Well, yes, compelled. Those of us like Snowden, who took a solemn oath “to support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies foreign and domestic” recognize that our oath has no “expiration date.”

During interviews, I found it easy to put the Snowden disclosures into perspective regarding the seriousness of the Bush and Obama administration crimes against the Fourth Amendment by simply reciting that key part of our now-fractured Bill of Rights; it’s just one sentence:

“The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no Warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by Oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.”

Director of National Intelligence James Clapper may be able to tell Congress with impunity (in his own words) “clearly erroneous” things, but neither he, nor his duplicitous sidekick NSA Director Keith Alexander, nor complicit Senators and Representatives, nor the President himself can easily bend the Fourth Amendment that far out of shape once people read the text.

And that, of course, explains why co-conspirators in Congress like House Speaker John Boehner and Senate Intelligence Committee chair Dianne Feinstein call the kettle black by branding Snowden a “traitor.” And it is also why former NSA and CIA director Michael Hayden and House Intelligence Committee chair Mike Rogers indicate publicly, as they did two weeks ago, that they would like to see Snowden’s name added to the infamous “Kill List” for the President’s approval.

That list renders the Fifth Amendment “quaint and obsolete,” the words used by George W. Bush’s White House counsel Alberto Gonzales when troublesome legal restrictions might otherwise impinge on what the White House wished to do.

American Traditions

At our dinner with Ed Snowden, Coleen Rowley reminded him that his willingness to expose injustice fit in with a patriotic tradition modeled by Founders like Benjamin Franklin even before the American Revolution.

Coleen recounted how Benjamin Franklin got himself in deep trouble in 1773, when he acquired and released confidential letters from the British governor of Massachusetts to the Crown showing that the colonial authorities did not think the American colonists should enjoy the same rights as British citizens in England. Franklin was fired from his post as Postmaster General and called a traitor and every other name in the book – many of them the same epithets hurled at Snowden.

More poignant still was a reading from Albert Camus beautifully rendered aloud by Jesselyn Radack, who related some of Camus writings to Snowden’s testimony (earlier read on his behalf by Jesselyn) to the European Parliament Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs on Sept. 30.
Snowden wrote: “The work of a generation is beginning here, with your hearings, and you have the full measure of my gratitude and support.”

**What follows is how Jesselyn Radack presented the quotes from Camus:**

Edward Snowden, you are in good company. “The Wager of Our Generation” is how Albert Camus described what you have called “The Work of a Generation,” when he spoke of a similar challenge in 1957, the year he won the Nobel Prize for Literature. And the similarity between Snowden and Camus does not end there. The official Nobel Prize citation praised Camus for “his clear-sighted earnestness illuminating the problems of the human conscience of our times.”

In 1957, Camus expressed hope in “the quality of the new generation and its increased unwillingness to adopt slogans or ideologies and to return to more tangible values.” He wrote: “We have nothing to lose except everything. So let’s go ahead. This is the wager of our generation. If we are to fail, it is better, in any case, to have stood on the side of those who refuse to be dogs and are resolved to pay the price that must be paid so that man can be something more than a dog.”

Camus rejected what he called the “the paltry privileges granted to those who adapt themselves to this world,” adding that, “those individuals who refuse to give in will stand apart, and they must accept this. Personally, I have never wanted to stand apart. For there is a sort of solitude, which is certainly the harshest thing our era forces upon us. I feel its weight, believe me. But, nevertheless, I should not want to change eras, for I know and respect the greatness of this one. Moreover, I have always thought that the maximum danger implied the maximum hope.”

In December 1957, the month he won the Nobel Prize, Camus strongly warned against inaction: “Remaining aloof has always been possible in history. When people did not approve, they could always keep silent or talk of something else. Today everything is changed and even silence has dangerous implications.”

And concrete dangers – like “turnkey tyranny.”

A key figure in the French Resistance, Camus in July 1943 published a “Letter to German Friend,” which began as follows: “You said to me: ‘The greatness of my country [Germany] is beyond price. Anything is good that contributes to its greatness. Those who, like us young Germans, are lucky enough to find a meaning in the destiny of our nation must sacrifice everything else.’”

“‘No,’ I told you, ‘I cannot believe that everything must be subordinate to a single end. There are means that cannot be excused. And I should like to be able to love my country and still love justice. I don’t want for my country a greatness born of blood and falsehood. I want to keep it alive by keeping justice alive.’ You retorted, ‘Well, then you don’t love your country.’”

Edward, that may have a familiar ring to you. But, of course, the truth is the very opposite. Let us take one more cue from Albert Camus, who emphasized that, “Truth needs witnesses.”

We are honored, Edward, to be here at this time and place to be your witnesses. You have the full measure of our gratitude and support.

**End of Jesselyn Radack’s presentation.**

People have been telling me how eloquent Ed Snowden was in responding to the award. And although DemocracyNow! hosted us for 40 minutes on Monday, we four did not have time to point to small, but significant, things like the fact Ed’s remarks were totally ad lib; he did not know he would be asked to give remarks until I whispered it to him right after Tom Drake presented him with the traditional Sam Adams corner-brightener candlestick holder.

One of the things that impressed me most was Ed’s emphasis on the “younger generation” he represents.
– typically those who have grown up with the Internet – who have (scarcely-fathomable-to-my-generation) technical expertise and equally remarkable dedication to keeping it free – AND have a conscience. My first personal exposure to the depth, breadth and importance of this critical mass of those often dismissed as “hackers” came at the OHM2013 conference outside of Amsterdam in early August.

The James Clappers and Keith Alexanders of this world simply CANNOT do what they see as their job of snooping on the lot of us on this planet without this incredibly talented and dedicated generation. They CANNOT; and so they are in deep kimchi. If only a small percentage of this young generation have the integrity and courage of an Ed Snowden, the prospect is dim that repressive measures in violation of citizens’ rights previously taken for granted can succeed for very long without full disclosure.

That is the good news. And with each new Snowden-enabled disclosure of infringements on our liberties, it becomes more likely that an awakened public will create sustained pressure for restoration of our Constitutional rights, and for holding accountable those senior government officials who have crassly violated those rights, and continue to violate Ed Snowden’s rights simply because he made it possible for us to know the truth.

Ray McGovern works for Tell the Word, a publishing arm of the ecumenical Church of the Saviour in inner-city Washington. Ray entered the CIA as an analyst on the same day as the late CIA analyst Sam Adams (a direct descendant of John Adams, by the way), and was instrumental in founding Sam Adams Associates for Integrity in Intelligence.

29 September 13AM

Reader Supported News

Snowden Files: NSA Gathers Data on Social Connections of US Citizens

James Risen, Laura Poitras, The New York Times

Risen and Poitras report: "Since 2010, the National Security Agency has been exploiting its huge collections of data to create sophisticated graphs of some Americans' social connections that can identify their associates, their locations at certain times, their traveling companions and other personal information."

READ MORE
A Media Microscope on Islam-Linked Violence
Selective reporting misrepresents Muslims as prone to killing

By Steve Rendall and Sara McCloskey

The murder of British soldier Sgt. Lee Rigby on a London street in May received massive U.S. media attention. The brazenness of the attackers—who allegedly struck Rigby with a car in broad daylight before hacking him to death with bladed weapons—guaranteed coverage. That the crime was captured on videotape from multiple sources didn’t hurt either. All told, Lee Rigby’s London murder has been mentioned in nearly 500 U.S. newspaper and wire stories, according to a search of the Nexis news database.

But the story also fit a comfortable media narrative: The attackers were Muslims who declared religious motivations. One of the assailants called the crime revenge for the
killing of Muslims by Western military forces (Reuters, 5/22/13). For many pundits, the Rigby killing provided dramatic “proof” of the violent and dangerous nature of Islam. Fox News liberal Bob Beckel (Five, 5/23/13) told viewers that Muslims are trying to impose a worldwide caliphate, and that Rigby’s killing was “a product of the British allowing Muslims to come into their country.” Bill O’Reilly (O’Reilly Factor, 6/5/13) invited Tommy Robinson, the leader of British hate group the English Defence League, onto his Fox News show. Robinson faced little challenge as he smeared Muslims, saying politicians are “constantly pandering to Islam and they’re constantly worried about what the Islamic community would do and how they will react to anything.”

The association of Islam with violence is not restricted to right-wing media. “For a self-described ‘religion of peace,’ Islam does claim a lot of lives,” wrote liberal New York Times columnist Nicholas Kristof (9/22/12) in a piece attempting to explain Muslim violence. On CNN (5/5/10), Anderson Cooper telegraphed a similar message when he asked HBO star Bill Maher: “Why is Islam the one religion that so many in America and in the West censor themselves when talking about or making fun of? Is it just fear?” This was a softball for Maher, a commentator known for anti-Muslim bigotry (FAIR Blog, 3/9/12), who responded that Muslims are “violent” and “threaten us.”

FAIR’s 2008 report, Smearcasting: How Islamophobes Spread Fear, Bigotry and Misinformation (10/1/08), found violent and dangerous portrayals of Muslims alive and well in centrist and liberal media habitats: The 2006 National Book Critics Circle nominated for an award the flagrantly Islamophobic While Europe Slept: How Radical Islam Is Destroying the West From Within, while the New York Times gifted new subscribers with the anti-Muslim DVD, Obsession: Radical Islam’s War Against the West in 2006.

The best-known focus of the whirlwind of smears by the corporate media would be the Park51 Islamic community center, inaccurately but pervasively described as the “Ground Zero Mosque.” Media portrayed the center as a slap in the face to families of 9/11 victims—and as proof that the Obama administration was failing to protect citizens from Muslim extremists (Extra!, 10/10).

But is Islam, as Kristof, Maher and O’Reilly suggest, really particularly violent? It’s a curious argument to make from the vantage point of the United States, which has in recent years launched wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and lesser military strikes in at least a half-a-dozen other nations—violence that has cost at least hundreds of
thousands of lives over the past decade (Iraq Body Count, 3/19/13; FAIR Blog, 6/7/13).
And looking over the last century, the bloodiest in human history, it’s an equally strange argument to make from a Western, Christian-majority nation. As University of Michigan Islam scholar Juan Cole (Informed Comment, 4/23/13) points out, of the more than 100 million war deaths in the 20th century, something less than 2 percent came at the hands of Muslim-majority nations. Most of those dead came in wars where non-Muslim nations played a significant role—such as the Iran/Iraq War, where the United States aided the aggressor Iraq, and the Afghan Civil War, where the Soviet Union was a major military force.
Cole also explains that “murder rates in most of the Muslim world are very low compared to the United States,” which is especially violent for a wealthy nation. According to a Gallup poll (8/2/11; FAIR Blog, 5/3/13), Muslim Americans disapprove of violence against civilians at an exceptionally high rate. When asked if it “is justified for an individual or a small group of people to target and kill civilians,” 89 percent of Muslims said that it is never justified, which was the highest disapproval rate of the six religious and nonreligious groups polled. Muslim Americans also rejected military killing of civilians by a wide margin, while a majority of Protestants, Catholics, Jews and Mormons approved of such killings.

Glenn Greenwald (5/23/13) makes a strong case that the killing of Rigby, a sergeant in the British Army, though political violence, was not terrorism, which is generally defined as political violence targeting civilians. But U.S. coverage of even strictly defined terrorism gives a distorted impression that most of it is linked to Muslims.

CNN's Anderson Cooper wonders why we can't make fun of Islam; HBO's Bill Maher explains it is because Muslims are "violent" and "threaten us."

In “More Terror, Less Coverage,” Extra! (5/11) showed how a story about an amateurish bomb that fizzled in Times Square in May 2010, planted by a Muslim American, got far more coverage than a much more lethal bomb planted by a white racist in Spokane, Washington, disarmed just hours before its planned detonation during a 2011 Martin Luther King Day parade.
This is par for a media that has an especially hard time reporting domestic terrorism
with context or proportionality. Charles Kurzman (*Think Progress, 9/10/11*), author of *The Missing Martyrs: Why There Are So Few Muslim Terrorists*, noted in 2011 that since 9/11, Muslim American terrorists “have killed 33 individuals in the United States.” The University of North Carolina terrorism expert put that number in the larger context of U.S. violence: “Over that same period of time, there have been more than 150,000 murders in the United States.” That’s 0.02 percent of homicides since 2001 attributable to Muslim American terrorism.

A 2010 RAND study found that of the “83 terrorist attacks in the United States between 9/11 and the end of 2009, only three...were clearly connected with the jihadist cause” (*Extra!, 5/11*). Out of the 3 million Muslims living in the United States, around 100 joined jihadist groups during the study period, which according to RAND suggests that American Muslims overwhelmingly do not agree with radical ideology and the violent actions associated with it.

Cole found similar data on Europe. While the European Union’s population is 4.5 percent Muslim (Pew Research Center, *1/11*)—“less than 1 percent of terrorist acts in the continent were committed by people from that community” from 2007 to 2009 (*Informed Comment, 4/23/13*).

**To successfully equate Islam with terrorism** requires downplaying terrorism perpetrated by non-Muslims. As conservative *Fox News* commentator Brian Kilmeade (*Fox & Friends, 10/15/10*) put it, “Not all Muslims are terrorists, but all terrorists are Muslim.” Kilmeade was defending *Fox News* host Bill O’Reilly, who’d been criticized for stating on *ABC’s View* (*10/14/10*) that “Muslims killed us on 9/11!” Kilmeade later retracted the comment (*Fox & Friends, 10/18/10*; *Media Matters, 10/18/10*), but Michael Goodwin, a columnist for *Fox’s* sibling publication, the Murdoch-owned *New York Post* (*4/28/13*), used the exact same phrase in a recent column on the Boston Marathon bombing.

But more influential than the overt bigotry of the Kilmeades and O’Reillys is the drumbeat of media attention to Muslim-linked violence compared to violence and terrorism linked to other groups.

In June, two men in upstate New York were arrested and charged with conspiracy to support terrorism after building a weapon that would shoot radiation into “enemies of Israel.” Possible target locations included an Albany Mosque and a Schenectady Islamic center (*AP, 6/19/13*; CAIR, 6/24/13). According to Nexis, only 24 newspapers and newswires covered the story in the U.S.

Three weeks before the gruesome murder of Lee Rigby in London, Mohammed Saleem, a 75 year-old Muslim man, was stabbed to death while returning from a
mosque in Birmingham, 100 miles north of London. The murder is being considered a hate crime by police (Birmingham Mail, 5/25/13). The entire U.S. media coverage of Mohammed Saleem’s murder, according to Nexis, was a single 136-word dispatch (5/1/13) from the UPI wire service.

GREENWALD: US DENUNCIATION OF RUSSIAN ASYLUM FOR SNOWDEN HYPOCRITICAL

- Glenn Greenwald
- theguardian.com, Wednesday 7 August 2013 11.

President Barack Obama today canceled a meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin. Photograph: Evan Vucci/AP

(updated below)

President Obama today canceled a long-scheduled summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin in part because the US president is upset that Russia defied his personal directive to hand over Edward Snowden despite the lack of an extradition treaty between the two nations. That means that US media outlets will spend the next 24 hours or so channeling the government's views (excuse the redundancy) by denouncing the Russian evil of refusing extradition. When doing so, very few, if any, establishment media accounts will mention any of these cases:

New York Times, February 28, 2007:
The US constantly refuses requests to extradite - even where (unlike Russia) they have an extradition treaty with the requesting country and even where (unlike Snowden) the request involves actual, serious crimes, such as genocide, kidnapping, and terrorism. Maybe those facts should be part of whatever media commentary there is on Putin's refusal to extradite Snowden and Obama's rather extreme reaction to it.
Other matters

Former Bush-era CIA and NSA director Michael Hayden appeared on CNN this week and confirmed that our reporting on the NSA's X-Keyscore program was accurate, telling the nation that we should all be grateful for those capabilities.

NYU journalism professor Jay Rosen has a superb essay on the behavior of the US media in NSA stories.

Foreign Policy CEO and Editor David Rothkopf becomes the latest establishment figure to recognize, as he puts it in a quite good column: "I have myself been too slow to recognize that the benefits we have derived from Snowden's revelations substantially outweigh the costs associated with the breach."

UPDATE

Civil rights hero John Lewis, in an interview with the Guardian today, praised Snowden for engaging in "civil disobedience" in the tradition of Thoreau, Gandhi and the Civil Rights movement.

Meanwhile, 150 press freedom and human rights groups from around the world issued a letter demanding that the US cease prosecuting Snowden on the ground that "Snowden's disclosures have triggered a much-needed public debate about mass surveillance online everywhere" and "thanks to him, we have learned the extent to which our online lives are systematically monitored by governments, without transparency, accountability or safeguards from abuse."

At a hearing yesterday of the Brazilian Senate's Foreign Relations Committee, at which I testified, senators not only uniformly expressed indignation at indiscriminate NSA spying on their citizens and support for Snowden, but some borrowed Snowden masks worn by college students in attendance and put them on their own face to show support.

Finally, Princeton University international law professor Richard Falk has an Op-Ed today explaining that the granting of asylum to Snowden wasn't just within Russia's rights, but was legally compelled.

Maybe Obama can cancel meetings with all of them, too, as punishment (along with Hong Kong, China, Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia, Nicaragua, Cuba and Russia as countries who have been threatened). I think it's becoming increasingly clear here who the rogue and lawless nation is in this case.

On Thu, Aug 8, 2013 at 10:05 AM, kxl pipeline truthforce <kxlpipelinetruthforce@gmail.com> wrote:

this is a disturbing, counterproductive response by our commander and chief

Obama Cancels Russian Trip Over Snowden Asylum

By The Canadian Press, Associated Press

08 August 13

President Barack Obama is cancelling plans to meet with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow next month - a rare diplomatic snub.

The move is in response to Russia's decision to grant temporary asylum to Edward Snowden, who is accused of leaking highly secretive details about National Security Agency surveillance programs. It also reflects growing U.S. frustration with Russia on several issues, including missile defense and human rights.

A top White House official said Obama still attends to plan the Group of 20 economic summit next month in St. Petersburg, Russia, but has no plans to meet with Putin there one-on-one.
Cancelling the meeting denies Putin a prominent moment just as global attention will be turning to the summit. Obama said in an interview Tuesday that he was "disappointed" by Russia's move to grant Snowden asylum for one year. He said it also reflected the "underlying challenges" the U.S. faces in dealing with Moscow.

"There have been times where they slip back into Cold War thinking and a Cold War mentality," Obama said in an interview on NBC's "The Tonight Show."

Obama and Putin last met in June on the sidelines of the Group of 8 summit in Northern Ireland. White House spokesman Jay Carney said the U.S. told the Russian government Wednesday morning that Obama believed "it would be more constructive to postpone the summit until we have more results from our shared agenda."

Instead of visiting Putin in Moscow, the president will add a stop in Sweden to his early September travel itinerary.

In Moscow, the Kremlin expressed its disappointment but said it remains ready to work with the United States on a variety of issues. Putin's foreign affairs adviser, Yuri Ushakov, told reporters the move reflected the inability of the U.S. to develop relations with Moscow on an "equal basis." He said the invitation to Obama to visit Moscow next month still stands.

"This decision is clearly linked to the situation with former agent of U.S. special services (Edward) Snowden, which hasn't been created by us," Ushakov said.

White House deputy national security adviser Ben Rhodes said Russia's decision last week to defy the U.S. only worsened an already troubled relationship. And with few signs that progress would be made during the Moscow summit on other agenda items, Rhodes said the president decided to cancel the talks.

"We'll still work with Russia on issues where we can find common ground, but it was the unanimous view of the president and his national security team that a summit did not make sense in the current environment," Rhodes said.

Obama's decision is likely to deepen the chill in the already frosty relationship between the two leaders. They have frequently found themselves at odds on pressing international issues, most recently in Syria, where the U.S. accuses Putin of helping President Bashar Assad fund a civil war. The U.S. has also been a vocal critic of Russia's crackdown on Kremlin critics and recently sanctioned 18 Russians for human rights violations.

Moscow has accused the U.S. of installing a missile shield in Eastern Europe as a deterrent against Russia, despite American assurances that the shield is not aimed at its former Cold War foe. Putin also signed a law last year banning U.S. adoptions of Russian children, a move that was seen as retaliation for the U.S. measure that cleared the way for the human rights sanctions.

Secretary of State John Kerry and Defence Secretary Chuck Hagel are still preparing for meetings in Washington on Friday with their Russian counterparts. Snowden's status is expected to be a main topic of conversation.

Some congressional lawmakers have called for Obama to demand that Russia forfeit its right to host the G-20 summit. Others have spoken of boycotting next year's Winter Olympics in the Russian city of Sochi.

Sen. Chuck Schumer said Wednesday that "Putin doesn't deserve the respect after what he's done with Snowden." He told CNN, "I know what he's doing. He's trying to make Russia a big power again. To show him the respect at the bilateral talks doesn't make sense."

In his interview Tuesday, Obama defended his decision to attend the G-20 summit, an annual gathering of the world's largest economies. Given the U.S. role in an increasingly interdependent global economy, Obama said it made sense to have high-level representation.

The G-20 summit is scheduled to take place in St. Petersburg on Sept. 5-6. The White House said Obama would arrive in Stockholm, Sweden, on Sept. 4 for his first visit as president to the Northern European nation.

Rhodes said Sweden has been an important U.S. partner on clean energy issues and will be part of a U.S. trade agreement being negotiated. . . .
In a letter pressing Russia not to grant asylum to former NSA contractor Edward Snowden, Attorney General Eric Holder made the highly disingenuous promise that Snowden will not be tortured if he is returned to the United States. “I can report that the United States is prepared to provide to the Russian government the following assurances regarding the treatment Mr. Snowden would face upon return to the United States,” Holder wrote Alexander Vladimirovich Konovalov, the Russian minister of justice, on July 23. “First, the United States would not seek the death penalty for Mr. Snowden should he return to the United States.” In addition, “Mr. Snowden will not be tortured. Torture is unlawful in the United States.” Holder continued, “We believe these assurances eliminate these asserted grounds for Mr. Snowden’s claim that he should be treated as a refugee or granted asylum, temporary or otherwise.” The fact that the U.S. attorney general needs to send a letter to a foreign government assuring them that an American citizen will not be killed or tortured in his own country seems damning enough on its face. But in fact, Holder’s pledge is by most standards untrue. It relies on a conveniently narrow definition of torture, which precludes forms of extreme psychological and physical abuse that are deemed torturous by the United Nations and a host of human rights groups, but not by the United States government. Chief among these is prolonged solitary confinement.
Snowden faces charges of “willful communication of classified communications to an unauthorized recipient” and “unauthorized communication of national-defense information.” Never mind the fact that most of the information was leaked long ago to journalists like James Bamford. Snowden need only look to the treatment of others accused of national security breaches to see what would surely await him in the United States. Bradley Manning was subjected to more than nine months of pre-trial solitary confinement, some of it naked in a bare cell. Suspects held in the civilian, rather than military, justice systems fared, if anything, worse than Manning, who was eventually removed from solitary. Muslims accused of relatively minor national security-related offenses have spent years in pre-trial solitary under “Special Administrative Measures” (SAMS) which bar all communication with the outside world. Finally, driven mad by isolation and convinced that they cannot get a fair trial, they are pressured to take pleas with sentences ranging 30 years and up, likely to be served indefinite solitary confinement.

In all probability, if the Russians give up Snowden, he will be brought back to American soil and immediately placed in solitary confinement under SAMS. Once he is convicted—which seems virtually guaranteed—he will continue to be held in solitary, for “national security” reasons or perhaps purportedly for his own safety. He could well end up at ADX, the infamous federal supermax prison in Florence, Colorado, the most state-of-the-art isolation facility in the world, where individuals live in 23- to 24-hour solitary in small concrete cells. His attorneys can then argue for such things as permission to exercise outdoors in a kennel run, perhaps without his legs being shackled and hands manacled, or to visit a family member through a glass barrier.

Snowden might be driven to some of the crazy and desperate behaviors demonstrated by other residents of ADX after years of extreme isolation and sensory deprivation. According to a current lawsuit, “Prisoners interminably wail, scream and bang on the walls of their cells. Some mutilate their bodies with razors, shards of glass, writing utensils and whatever other objects they can obtain. Some swallow razor blades, nail clippers, parts of radios and televisions, broken glass and other dangerous objects.” One man held at ADX, who had no prior history of mental illness or self-harm, has both cut himself extensively and bitten off both his pinky fingers. Suicide attempts are common.

And all this while he is not being tortured.
Fwd: SNA Video: "Oliver Stone: Snowden Is a Hero; Obama Is a Snake"

Sonny San Juan [philasc@sbcglobal.net]

_Actions_ Wednesday, August 14, 2013 1:47 PM

rom: Shingetsu News Agency <shingetsunewsagency@gmail.com>
Date: Tue, Aug 13, 2013 at 2:36 AM
Subject: SNA Video: "Oliver Stone: Snowden Is a Hero; Obama Is a Snake"
To: Shingetsu News Agency <shingetsunewsagency@gmail.com>

Dea All,

The latest SNA Video has just gone up. Oliver Stone spoke so well at the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan yesterday that I just had to make this one available quickly.

**Oliver Stone: Snowden Is a Hero; Obama Is a Snake**

Link: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v01Cszk5Ta8&feature=c4-overview&list=UUsPajG-xJnanhNvbSiV9i7Q](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v01Cszk5Ta8&feature=c4-overview&list=UUsPajG-xJnanhNvbSiV9i7Q)

Take 5 and check it out! Michael
Edward Snowden has been characterized as many things in recent weeks, but journalists' discounting him as a "high-school dropout" speaks volumes about media portrayals of education.

Megyn Kelly of Fox News (6/11/13) began a segment by referring to Snowden as a "high-school dropout," as if this detail was more important than his name, which was only mentioned sentences later.

New York Times columnist David Brooks (6/10/13) attempted to discredit him by saying, "Though obviously terrifically bright, he could not successfully work his way through the institution of high school. Then he failed to navigate his way through community college." Brooks suggested that there's no way to be a successful part of "civil society" if you are not part of "a series of gently graduated authoritative structures."

While no one can say exactly Edward Snowden quit high school, there are students in our country who don’t fit into such "structures" and have dropped out as a result. Snowden apparently preferred independent self-study, which gave him a General Equivalency Diploma (GED).

Kelly barely remembered to include this detail. Under the headline "NSA Leaker Background: Dropped Out of High School & the Army," she reported, "So he is 29, never graduated from high school," and finished with a look of distaste, "I think he got his GED." Reviving the racially charged and negatively reinforced stereotype of the GED student (the GED is disproportionately used by minorities—National Institute of Health, 5/1/11) and the high-school dropout, Kelly implied that someone who didn't...
officially graduate high school isn't entitled to much respect. Snowden doesn't really fit the stereotypical "high-school dropout" image. At age 29, his unconventional path had already found him success: He was making six figures a year as a government contractor doing what he loved. To do so well, he obviously must be intelligent, motivated and skilled, which makes Kelly expressing dismay at "people with that resume and that background" having his job seem ironic.

The media discovered his educational history from the Guardian (6/11/13), which profiled Snowden after breaking the story. The Atlantic (6/9/13) reported, "The first version of the Guardian piece described Snowden as a high-school dropout, which raised a lot of eyebrows as the U.S. Army does not take people without either a high-school diploma or a General Equivalency Diploma, with very rare exceptions. The paper later clarified that he holds a GED."

CNN (6/10/13), ABC (6/24/13) and NBC (6/22/13) also reported Snowden as a "high-school dropout" without mentioning his GED.

In his syndicated column, Mark Shields (6/19/13) wrote that attacking Snowden by labeling him a high-school dropout was "as stupid as it is snobbish." He wrote:

Consider these high-school dropouts: Founding father and genius inventor Benjamin Franklin. Founding Father and First President George Washington. The founder of modern nursing, Florence Nightingale. American aviation pioneers Orville and Wilbur Wright. The first lady of civil rights, Rosa Parks, who refused a Montgomery Alabama bus driver’s order to give up her seat to a white passenger. The man who gave the world its most popular chocolate bar, Milton Hershey. Before he would become America’s most beloved author, Mark Twain left school at the age of 12 to become a printer’s apprentice. The great man who saved the Union, Abraham Lincoln.

And if formal education and advanced degrees are the key to wisdom, please explain how the United States was so misled into the tragedy of the invasion and occupation of Iraq by such well-credentialed academics.

Reihan Salam of Reuters (6/14/13) wrote in an opinion piece:

I found the reaction to Snowden’s dropout status disheartening. Instead of lamenting the fact that a high-school dropout has fared so well, we ought to celebrate it, allegations of treason notwithstanding. It must be said that the fact that he was able to climb so high is a sign that at least some elite American institutions are still willing to take chances, and that is a very good thing.

END SNOWDEN NEWSLETTER #2
Dick Bennett

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