

Beat: Business

`Homesick` Snowden gets 3-year residence permit in Russia

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USPA News - American whistleblower Edward Snowden, who is wanted by the United States for his disclosure of classified details about the extend of the U.S. government's secret surveillance programs, has been granted a three-year residence permit in Russia, his lawyer said Thursday. Snowden received his three-year residence permit on August 1, a day after his initial temporary asylum expired.

His lawyer Anatoly Kucherenka was quoted as saying by Russian news agencies that the former National Security Agency (NSA) contractor had not requested political asylum, which would have allowed Snowden to stay in Russia permanently. "He will be able to travel freely within the country and go abroad. He'll be able to stay abroad for not longer than three months," Kucherenka said. He said Snowden would be able to apply for Russian citizenship after five years, but added that the whistleblower had not yet made a decision on whether to do so. "By all means he is homesick," Kucherenka said. "It was hard for him to find himself far from home, especially for the first time. Of course, in the future Edward will make up his mind on whether to stay in Russia and apply for citizenship or to leave for the U.S. He hasn't done this yet." Responding to Thursday's news, U.S. National Security Council (NSC) spokesman Ned Price urged Snowden to return to the United States. "Mr. Snowden faces felony charges here in the United States. He should return to the U.S. as soon as possible, where he will be accorded full due process and protections," the spokesman said. A spokeswoman for the National Security Agency declined to comment. Sarah Harrison, acting director of the organization that runs Snowden's defense fund, said she was "relieved" to hear Thursday's news. "I'm relieved to hear that Edward Snowden will continue to be protected, keeping him safe from American prosecution," she said. "Although the US government has lost this round, let us not forget the stakes - last year whistleblower Chelsea Manning was sentenced to 35 years in a U.S. military prison and the grand jury against both WikiLeaks and Edward Snowden continues." The U.S. charged Snowden with three felony counts, including violations of the U.S. Espionage Act, after he disclosed classified documents to reporters about the U.S. government's secret surveillance programs. He publicly revealed his identity while in Hong Kong, but he later fled and became stuck inside the transit zone at a Moscow airport for five weeks before Russia granted him temporary asylum. Controversy remains about whether Snowden should be praised or condemned, with supporters arguing that Snowden's actions revealed the extend of the U.S. government's spying around the world. Critics say Snowden's disclosures hurt the United States, with U.S. lawmakers claiming that terrorists have changed their methods, which would put American troops overseas at risk.

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