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US pressured Norway to arrest & extradite Snowden, seize all devices – documents

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Norway's Ministry of Foreign Affairs received the first letter from Washington shortly after the former National Security Agency (NSA) contractor's revelations went public when he was stranded in Moscow's Sheremetyevo airport.

The note, dated June 27, 2013, was quoted by Norway's [NRK broadcaster](#): *"We request that should US citizen Edward J. Snowden attempt to enter Norway through any means, the Government of Norway notify the Embassy immediately and effectuate the return of Mr. Snowden to the United States by way of denial of entry, deportation, expulsion or other lawful means."*

On the same day, the FBI's Scandinavia office followed up with another letter addressed to justice authorities in Norway, Sweden and Finland. It described Snowden as a criminal fugitive and urged them to notify American personnel if the whistleblower booked a flight to one of their countries from Moscow.

These correspondences were followed up with a separate message to Norway's Department of Foreign Affairs on July 4, 2013, requesting that Snowden be arrested and extradited if he were to attempt to enter Norwegian territory. *"The United States urges that Snowden be kept in custody, if arrested,"* the note said.

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The language in documents revealed by NRK reflects how desperately the US wanted to contain the information Snowden had in his possession.

*“The Embassy requests the seizure of all articles acquired as a result of the offenses (..) This includes, but is not limited to, all computer devices, electronic storage devices and other sorts of electronic media.”*

The most problematic aspect of the US making such bullish requests is that Snowden would have been denied his international right to apply for asylum before being arrested had the countries complied, Snowden’s lawyer Ben Wizner told NRK.

*“What is troubling to me is the suggestion that if Mr. Snowden showed up in one of these countries, he should be promptly extradited – before he would have a chance to raise his humanitarian rights under international law,”* he said.

*“The only correct response from political leaders in Norway or any other free society should be to tell the US that this is a question of law and not a question of politics. And that, under international law, someone who is charged with a political offense has a right to raise a claim for asylum before the question of extradition even comes up.”*

Snowden has been invited to Norway to receive the prestigious Bjørnson Prize by the Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson Academy for freedom of expression. The award is being presented to Snowden *“for work protecting privacy and for shining a critical light on US surveillance of its citizens and others.”*

However, it is still unclear whether Norway would arrest Snowden if he attempted to enter the country.

Norway’s Justice and Foreign Affairs departments said that the US’ requests had not been answered because, under Norwegian law, no country can make an extradition request until the alleged criminal is actually on Norwegian territory.

Jøran Kallemyr, State Secretary in Norway’s Department of Justice, confirmed this view: *“What Norway has done is to inform the American authorities how the Norwegian system works,”* he said. *“If they request an extradition, the prosecuting authorities will decide if the case should be brought before the courts. And the court will decide if the terms for extradition are fulfilled.”*

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Norway is not the only country reportedly bullied to hand over Snowden. Washington threatened to stop sharing intelligence with Berlin should Germany offer asylum to Snowden or even try to arrange any kind of travel to Germany, according to a report by journalist Glenn Greenwald.

*“They told us they would stop notifying us of plots and other intelligence matters,”* German Vice Chancellor Sigmar Gabriel said earlier this week, as cited by Greenwald in the Intercept.

Snowden sought political asylum in Russia in 2013 after facing arrest and extradition to the US, where he has been charged under the country’s Espionage Act.

On August 1, 2013, Russia granted him asylum for one year, saying it had no other legal choice. A year later, Snowden received a Russian residence permit valid for three years, valid from August 1, 2014. In March, he publicly asked Switzerland to grant him political asylum.

Snowden has been condemned as a criminal in the US for leaking a vast trove of classified material to journalists who published the documents, revealing the espionage antics of the NSA's global spying operations.

The documents leaked by Snowden informed the public that the US government, together with European allies, is gathering and storing millions of pieces of metadata on citizens. Other disclosures revealed that the NSA bugged the personal communications of high-ranking businessmen and world leaders, including German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff.

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