

# Clarifying Snowden's 'Freedom'

A common angle from the mainstream U.S. media is that NSA leaker Edward Snowden will regret his asylum in Russia (rather than life in prison in the U.S.). A quote from ex-CIA analyst Ray McGovern was used in support of that theme, but he has asked the New York Times to clarify it.

By Ray McGovern (addressing the New York Times editors)

I was quoted in Steven Lee Myers's "In Shadows, Hints of a Life and Even a Job for Snowden," published by the New York Times on Oct. 31, as saying (about former National Security Agency contractor Edward Snowden), "He's free, but not completely free" in asylum in Russia.

An unfortunate juxtaposition in the text of Mr. Myers's piece has led several acquaintances to misinterpret my words. I trust you will agree that the issue is of some importance; thus, my request that you publish this clarification.

Mr. Myers quotes me correctly. Unfortunately, the immediately preceding sentences quote a Russian journalist, who "cautioned" that the appearance of a "happy, open asylum" could be "propaganda," and that the Russian security services might be waiting to question Mr. Snowden until he becomes "increasingly dependent on them."

This is not at all what I meant by "not completely free." For starters, I guess I'm not sure how free you can feel being stateless, the State Department having revoked your passport.

Still more on this issue emerged on Oct. 9, after Mr. Snowden was presented with this year's Sam Adams Associates Award for Integrity in Intelligence. We four Sam Adams Associates Jesselyn Radack, Thomas Drake, Coleen Rowley, and I chatted into the wee hours with Mr. Snowden and WikiLeaks journalist Ms. Sarah Harrison. (It was Ms. Harrison who facilitated his departure from Hong Kong on June 23. She has been at his side ever since to witness that he is not undergoing at the hands of the Russians what in some Western countries are called "enhanced interrogation techniques.")

I asked Mr. Snowden whether he was aware that just six days before our Sam Adams award ceremony, Michael Hayden, former director of both the NSA and the CIA had said publicly that he had "thought of nominating Mr. Snowden ... for a different list" an unmistakable hint that Mr. Snowden be put on President Barack Obama's infamous "Kill List." With a wan smile, Mr. Snowden assured me that Yes; he keeps well up on such things.

And did he know that Mike Rogers, chair of the House Intelligence Committee, chimed right in with immediate support for Hayden's suggestion, stating, "I can help you with that?" This time the wan smile gave way to a wince and another Yes. (Both Hayden and Rogers were speaking at an Oct. 3 conference sponsored by the Washington Post, which, oddly, neglected to report on this macabre/mafia-type *pas de deux*.)

After the back-to-back wan smile and wince, I resisted the urge to ask Mr. Snowden if he saw reassurance in the official letter of July 23 from U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder to his Russian counterpart conveying Holder's promise: "Mr. Snowden will not be tortured ... if he returns to the United States."

In his Oct. 31 article, Mr. Myers includes an instructive remark from Anatoly Kucherena, a Russian lawyer assisting Mr. Snowden. Mr. Kucherena told Myers he would not discuss Mr. Snowden's life in exile "because the level of threat from the U.S. government structures is still very high."

THAT'S what I meant by "not completely free."

**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.**

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