



Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on July 30, 2013

Report Says Snowden Wants to Join KGB Veterans Group

The strange journey of Edward Snowden (shown) may have taken another bizarre turn, as the head of a KGB veterans group in Moscow has reported that Snowden, the whistleblower on the National Security Agency's secret collection of America's phone records and electronic messages, has applied for membership in the organization of former members of Russia's secret police.



Alexei Lobarev, chairman of the group called "Veterans of the Siloviki" — literally "men of power" — told a Russian news outlet on Monday that Snowden has applied for membership in the organization, the online Washington Free Beacon reported. Snowden fled his Hawaiian home for Hong Kong after turning over documents revealing the NSA's secret PRISM program to the *Guardian* of London and the *Washington Post*. He flew from Hong Kong to Moscow on June 23 and has been living in an airport transit lounge in the Russian capital ever since. Though he has applied for asylum in more than 20 nations, his ability to travel is limited by the U.S. State Department's revocation of his passport. He has applied for temporary asylum in Russia, where his application is still pending. U.S. officials have been pressuring Moscow to return Snowden to the United States to face trial on charges of espionage and theft of government property.

If true, the report from the KGB veterans group reveals a striking irony in the adventures of one who, having rebelled against the secret surveillance by the NSA, now seeks affiliation with former members of one of the most clandestine and tyrannical organizations in world history. It will likely lend support to the arguments of Snowden's detractors that the former intelligence analyst, who has been hailed by many as a heroic whistleblower, is really a traitor out to damage the national security of the United States. The Beacon report quotes Ariel Cohen, a Russia specialist with the conservative Heritage Foundation in Washington, on how the report, if verified, could change Snowden's status in the United States.

"It could be a spoof or a deliberate attempt to tar the former NSA contractor," Cohen said in an e-mail. "However, if proven true, this puts Snowden squarely into the defector category. Whatever the whistleblower rhetoric — if indeed it is Snowden — the man is seeking to join a group whose livelihood was to spy on and harm, the United States. There is hardly a more anti-American group in Russia than ex-security officials. They would want nothing more than to coddle Snowden."

It is not the first time the KGB has been mentioned in connection with Snowden's stay in the capital of the former Soviet Union. Sen. Bill Nelson (D-Fla.) said last month he suspected Russian President Vladimir Putin, "an old KGB officer," is "directing the show" starring Snowden, whom Nelson and other Washington officials have accused of "treason."

"And I wouldn't be surprised if the president of Russia is not giving the orders to milk him for every piece of information that he has," Nelson [said](#) in a June 24 speech in the Senate. "And if he really doesn't have anything, then I think the president of Russia is going to decide whether or not he wants to have a good relationship with the United States and might allow him to be extradited to the U.S."



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A month later, Snowden has still not been extradited, despite warnings from Washington that Moscow's refusal to turn over the refugee could damage that "good relationship" between the United States and Russia. As for Snowden seeking union with the KGB veterans, Cohen from the Heritage Foundation is among those expressing some skepticism, as indicated by his comment saying that the report "could be a spoof or a deliberate attempt to tarry the former NSA contractor."

Or it could be an attempt to appease the U.S. government without giving in to its demand to extradite Snowden. Washington may be more interested in discrediting Snowden than in bringing him back to the United States, where his trial might increase his standing as a hero, even a martyr, with Americans opposed to the NSA's secret collection and storage of billions of telephone and electronic communications made by the American people every day. Clearly the NSA and defenders of the agency's massive data collection would rather have the public's attention focused on the motives of Edward Snowden than on our government's motives for keeping virtually our entire population under constant surveillance.

Photo of Edward Snowden: [Laura Poitras](#) / Praxis Films



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