

White House Says U.S. Won't Pardon Edward Snowden



Washington, July 29 (RHC)-- The U.S. administration of President Barack Obama has rejected an on-line public petition asking for the pardon of National Security Agency whistleblower Edward Snowden.

The White House commissioned Lisa Monaco, Obama's advisor on homeland security and counter-terrorism, to officially respond to the two-years-old petition, which was posted to the White House's website on Tuesday.

Monaco wrote that Snowden's disclosures were "dangerous" and had "had severe consequences for the security of our country." She said: "If he felt his actions were consistent with civil disobedience, then he should do what those who have taken issue with their own government do: Challenge it, speak out, engage in a constructive act of protest, and — importantly — accept the consequences of his actions."

A petition calling for Obama to pardon Snowden was launched in 2013 and gained a total of 167,954 signatures, well over the 100,000 required to warrant an official response from the White House.

"Edward Snowden is a national hero and should be immediately issued a full, free, and absolute pardon for any crimes he has committed or may have committed related to blowing the whistle on secret NSA surveillance programs," the petition reads.

Snowden, who lives in Moscow where he has been granted asylum, has said US government surveillance methods far surpass those of an 'Orwellian' state, referring to George Orwell's classic novel "1984," which describes a society where personal privacy is continuously invaded by spy agencies.

In March, Snowden's Russian lawyer said that the whistleblower would be willing to return to the United States if he was "given a guarantee of a legal and impartial trial."

According to documents leaked by Snowden, the NSA has been collecting the phone records of millions of Americans and foreign nationals as well as political leaders from around the world.

Snowden's disclosures have led to a global uproar. His release of NSA files has been called the most significant leak in US history.

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