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U.S. Lawmakers Deny Clemency for Snowden

By The Moscow Times

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U.S. officials insisted that he broke the law and doesn't deserve clemency, but many advocates of transparency disagree. **ubiquit23**

Edward Snowden said that recent calls for closer scrutiny of government intelligence programs vindicated his leaking of classified documents and proved the disclosure was in the public interest, but U.S. officials insisted that he broke the law and doesn't deserve clemency.

In "A Manifesto for the Truth" published in Germany's Der Spiegel magazine on Sunday, Snowden said that "those who speak the truth are not committing a crime."

"Instead of causing damage, the usefulness of the new public knowledge for society is now clear because reforms to politics, supervision and laws are being suggested," the former NSA contractor said, according to a translation by Reuters.

Dan Pfeiffer, a senior adviser to U.S. President Barack Obama, rejected the plea for clemency.

"Mr. Snowden violated U.S. law," he told ABC's "This Week" on Sunday. "He should return to the U.S. and face justice."

The chairwoman of the Senate intelligence committee, Dianne Feinstein, a Democrat from California, said Snowden has done an "enormous disservice" to the country by going public with his leaks, instead of notifying intelligence watchdog agencies.

"He had an opportunity, if what he was was a whistleblower, to pick up the phone to call the House intelligence committee, the Senate intelligence committee and say, look, I have some information you ought to see." Feinstein said on CBS's "Face the Nation." "That didn't happen."

"I think the answer is no clemency," she said.

Her House counterpart Mike Rogers, a Republican from Michigan, told CBS that Snowden "violated his oath," and that his leaks alerted "three different terrorist organizations, affiliates of al-Qaida, to change the way they communicate."

Rogers called the option of granting Snowden clemency so that he could return to the U.S. and help investigate the NSA " a terrible idea."

Snowden singled out the NSA and its British counterpart, the Government Communications Headquarters, as the "worst offenders," but added that "we cannot forget that mass surveillance is a global problem and needs a global solution."

"The world has learned a lot in a short amount of time about irresponsibly operated security agencies and, at times, criminal surveillance programs. Sometimes the agencies try to avoid controls," Snowden wrote, according to a translation by CNN.

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