

Snowden Says He Doesn't Feel Safe Living in Russia

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Former security contractor and whistleblower Edward Snowden has said he does not feel safe living in Russia but feels proud about his role in revealing massive U.S. surveillance programs.

Russia granted Snowden asylum in 2013 after he exposed mass surveillance carried out by U.S. intelligence agencies around the world. He has led a reclusive life after moving to Russia, where his residence permit was extended "for another couple of years," the Foreign Ministry spokeswoman [said](#) last year.

Related article: [U.S. Whistleblower Edward Snowden Allowed to Stay in Russia for 'a Couple More Years'](#)

Snowden risks facing extensive prison time in the United States, which charged him with theft of government property, unauthorized communication of national defense information

and willful communication of classified intelligence.

“As for the future in Russia and what will happen there, I can’t say I’m safe,” Snowden [said](#) Thursday.

“But the real question is: Does it matter?” he said via satellite at an event organized by the University of Innsbruck in Austria. “I didn’t come forward to be safe.”

“If I wanted safety, I’d be sitting in Hawaii right now, making a lot of money, spying on everyone.”

The former National Security Agency (NSA) contractor conceded he “may have to spend the rest” of his life in exile.

“What that means is I can go to sleep at night not worrying about tomorrow,” Snowden told the applauding audience.

Addressing critics “suspicious about the fact that I’m in Russia even though I never chose to be in Russia,” the whistleblower reiterated his [assertion](#) that he has “no connection” with the Russian government.

“Russia is not my home; Russia is my place of exile,” he added.

Reuters contributed reporting to this article.

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