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Obama and Putin Spoke by Phone Over Obama's Obsession, Edward Snowden

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Pursuing his present obsession to get his hands on the American whistle-blower, Edward Snowden, President Barack Obama spoke by telephone with the Russian President Vladimir Putin. "On the initiative of the American side, the two Presidents had a telephone conversation. Putin and Obama exchanged views on bilateral cooperation and security topics. They also discussed the situation around Snowden," Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said.

The telephone call was triggered likely by the latest development in Moscow's Sheremetyevo airport where Snowden has been holed up in a transit zone since June 23. On July 12, reports indicate, Snowden met with a dozen prominent Russian lawyers and rights activists at the airport and announced his plans to ask for temporary asylum in Russia hoping to arrange an eventual safe passage to Ibero-America, where he has been offered asylum by several countries. The White House immediately criticized Russia for providing a "propaganda platform" for Snowden's announcement. White House spokesman Jay Carney told reporters on Friday that Snowden's announcement undermines "Russian assurances that they do not want Mr. Snowden to further damage U.S. interests." President Putin said last month that Moscow would consider granting Snowden asylum under the condition that he stop his work aimed at "damaging our American partners."



Obama's Snowden obsession spills into US-Russia relations.

In addition to Obama calling up Moscow, Obama's man-in-Moscow, Ambassador Michael McFaul directed a U.S. Embassy staffer to call Tanya Lokshina, Russia program director at Human Rights Watch, who was set to meet with Snowden at a media event at the Moscow airport and reiterate the administration's position that Snowden is an accused criminal, not a whistle-blower. Reflecting Obama's Snowden obsession, his administration officials kept on badgering human rights groups in public statements throughout the day. "Those groups do important work, but Mr. Snowden is not a human rights activist or dissident," said White House spokesman Jay Carney.

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