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# Kerry vows to put the screws to Venezuela over Snowden – report

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US Secretary of State John Kerry (AFP Photo / Karen Bleier)

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US Secretary of State John Kerry has reportedly promised his Venezuelan counterpart to close NATO airspace to the country's flights and stop crucial oil product deliveries if Caracas grants asylum to NSA leaker Edward Snowden.

Last Friday night, just hours after Venezuela agreed to provide political asylum to former NSA contractor Edward Snowden, Kerry personally called Venezuelan Foreign Minister Elias Jaua, a Spanish ABC media outlet cites a source familiar with the conversation as saying.

Kerry reportedly threatened to ground any Venezuelan aircraft in America's or any NATO country's airspace if there is the slightest suspicion that Snowden is using the flight to get to Caracas.

The media outlet's source said that the US' top diplomat sent a clear signal that Venezuela's Air Force One is not immune and President Nicolas Maduro could easily face the same fate as his Bolivian counterpart Evo Morales, whose plane was grounded for inspection in Austria earlier this month in violation of all international diplomatic agreements.

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US Secretary of State John Kerry (L) shakes hands with Venezuelan Foreign Minister Elias Jaua before a private meeting in Antigua Guatemala, 50 km southwest of Guatemala City on June 5, 2013. (AFP Photo / Johan Ordenez)

*"Immunity is for the president, not the plane,"* the ABC source cites Kerry's personal message to President Maduro as saying.

Closing all NATO member countries' aerospace to Venezuelan flights means avoiding 26 countries in Europe and two in North America. Under this scenario, it would be safer for Snowden to fly across the Pacific from Russia's Far Eastern city of Vladivostok instead of crossing the Atlantic.

Kerry also reportedly promised to intensify the ongoing process of revoking US entry visas to Venezuelan officials and businessmen associated with the deceased President Hugo Chavez.

Washington will also begin prosecuting prominent Venezuelan politicians on allegations of drug trafficking, money laundering and other criminal actions, Kerry allegedly said, and specifically mentioned some names in his conversation with the Venezuelan FM.

He reportedly also said that Washington is well aware of Venezuela's dependence on the US when it comes to refined oil products. Despite being one of the world's largest oil producers, Venezuela requires more petrol and oil products than it can produce, buying around 500,000 barrels of gasoline every month, roughly another half million barrels of fuel for power plants, and some 350,000 barrels of MTBE (Methyl Tertiary Butyl Ether) – the additive used for to increase octane in gasoline.

The source added that the US Secretary of State bluntly warned that fuel supplies would be halted if President Maduro continues to reach out to the fugitive NSA contractor.

Later on Friday US State Department deputy spokeswoman Marie Harf has denied that Kerry ever touched upon the possible nature of US response to Venezuela granting asylum to Snowden in his conversation with Jaua. She dismissed the report that Kerry has threatened Venezuela as *"utterly wrong."*

However, Harf said that there would be *"an appropriate response"* from the US, should the South American country help the NSA leaker.

The Venezuelan Foreign Ministry have not so far commented on ABC's report.

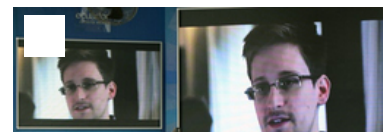
On July 19 President Maduro sharply criticized a statement by the Obama administration's nominee for UN envoy, Samantha Powers, who accused countries like Cuba, Iran, Russia and Venezuela of being guilty of a *"crackdown on civil society"*. Maduro called on Washington to retract the *"despicable"* statement.

*"I want an immediate correction by the US government,"* Maduro said live on state television, as quoted by Reuters.

*"Power says she'll fight repression in Venezuela? What repression? There is repression in the United*



Venezuela ready to help Snowden, but final decision with people - Maduro to RT 161



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The Terminal: Snowden stuck in Moscow transit flight to Havana



*States, where they kill African-Americans with impunity, and where they hunt the youngster Edward Snowden just for telling the truth," Maduro fumed.*

Former CIA technician and NSA contractor Snowden remains a fugitive without a passport, as he has remained stuck in Moscow's Sheremetyevo International Airport for nearly a month. Snowden requested temporary asylum from Russia and has not officially accepted Maduro's asylum offer, WikiLeaks says.

If extradited to the US, where Snowden is wanted on espionage charges, he fears he could face inhumane treatment and even the death penalty for leaking details of the National Security Agency's dragnet surveillance programs.

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## Comments (526)

Patrick Piklapp 22.07.2013 00:31

Well, that will not last! We got lucky with previous 'hijackings' of important officials planes, but all it takes is one major complaint. What separates the US from the terrorists? Just the size of the operations.

Anonymous user 22.07.2013 00:16

Everybody get together and protest against the US government. It is the global tyranny now.

Anonymous user 22.07.2013 00:15

USA is now a monster.

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