

Oliver Stone Snowden movie to be part-based on fictionalised account

Director will use novel written by Anatoly Kucherena, whistleblower's Russian lawyer, as well as book by Guardian's Luke Harding as basis for film

Shaun Walker in Moscow

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Oliver Stone said he would use both Anatoly Kucherena's book about Edward Snowden and *The Snowden Files* by Guardian reporter Luke Harding as the basis for his film. Photograph: Chinafotopress/Getty Images

The film director Oliver Stone has bought the rights to a forthcoming novel based on the life of the whistleblower Edward Snowden and written by Snowden's Russian lawyer.

Time of the Octopus will be published later this year, and is authored by Anatoly Kucherena, one of the few people who has had regular access to Snowden since he arrived in Moscow nearly a year ago. The former National Security Agency contractor retained Kucherena when he was stuck in limbo in the transit area of Moscow's Sheremetyevo airport.

Stone, who has long been a critic of the US establishment, has met Kucherena to discuss the film project, and said he would use both Kucherena's book and *The Snowden Files* by Guardian reporter Luke Harding as the basis for the screenplay of his movie, which is due to begin production later this year.

The plot of the novel revolves around a fictional American whistleblower named Joshua Cold who flees the US and gets stuck for weeks in the transit zone of a Moscow airport, where he strikes up a friendship with a Russian lawyer and opens up about why he decided to expose a massive American surveillance programme.

The novel's outline strongly resembles what happened to Snowden, who was stuck in Moscow when US authorities revoked his passport as he changed flights en route from Hong Kong to Cuba last summer, intending apparently to travel on to a Latin American country such as Ecuador. After more than a month, he was granted temporary asylum by Russia, helped by Kucherena. His asylum is due for renewal shortly, and Kucherena has previously said that Snowden plans to reapply for another year's stay in Moscow, where he remains hidden from public view and little is known about his life.

Kucherena was one of a group of human rights defenders and public figures invited to an initial meeting with Snowden after he arrived in Moscow, and it is unclear whether Snowden chose the lawyer to represent him or the Russian authorities suggested him.

Kucherena is a member of a public body that oversees the FSB, Russia's security service, and the lawyer's association with Snowden led some to believe that the American was being manipulated by the Russians. However, President Vladimir Putin and other Russian officials have repeatedly denied they have any intelligence interest in Snowden.

In a statement, Kucherena said: "The more I engaged in the Edward Snowden case, the more I was impressed by his story. To understand Edward and his actions, I had to 'tune to his wavelength' and try to balance between the rational and intuitive perception of his world. Having experienced these incredible sensations, I realised that I had to write about them, but only in the form of a novel that would not claim any sophisticated philosophical conclusions."

Of the Russian's novel, Stone said: "Anatoly has written a 'grand inquisitor' style Russian novel weighing the soul of his fictional whistleblower, Joshua Cold, against the gravity of a '1984' tyranny that has achieved global proportions. His meditations on the meaning of totalitarian power in the 21st century make for a chilling, prescient horror story."

Best and worst