

Washington is bullying Hong Kong to extradite me, says Edward Snowden

America is desperate to prevent me leaking further information, whistle-blower says

The US has been “trying to bully” Hong Kong’s government into extraditing surveillance whistle-blower Edward Snowden, he told the *Post* in an exclusive interview.

Hong Kong justice officials have so far declined to comment on any official or unofficial approaches they may have from their US counterparts, but the former CIA contractor warned that America was desperate to prevent him leaking further sensitive information.

He said: “I heard today from a reliable source that the United States government is trying to bully the Hong Kong government into extraditing me before the local government can learn of this [the US National Security Agency hacking people in Hong Kong]. The US government will do anything to prevent me from getting this into the public eye, which is why they are pushing so hard for extradition.”

So far, Hong Kong’s government has failed to make any statement regarding Snowden’s presence in the city since May 20 or where it stands on the issues of asylum and extradition.

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Chief Executive Leung Chun-ying has remained tight-lipped on the matter in what has turned out to be an awkward trip to the United States to promote trade relations. He refused to respond to media questions about the case when he attended a plenary meeting hosted by the Hong Kong-US Business Council in New York yesterday.

Earlier in the week he met New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg to talk about the challenges facing both their cities, but again, no mention of the Snowden affair was made. The meeting had been rescheduled in the immediate aftermath of Snowden revealing himself as the source of the leaks.

Before a dinner in his honour hosted by the Hong Kong Trade Development Council on Tuesday, Leung, who flies home today, was asked six questions by reporters about Snowden. “I have no comment on individual cases,” he said.

Asked whether he had discussed the issue with US officials and whether US officials had sought assistance from the Hong Kong government, Leung again said he could not comment.

Asked about how extraditions to friendly countries were handled, he said: “In general, we follow the laws and our policies.”

The leaks have set off a furore in the US with President Barack Obama defending the programme as vital to keeping Americans safe. The director of National Intelligence James Clapper said it gathers data trails left by targeted foreign citizens using the internet outside the US.

The chief of the NSA, General Keith Alexander, was yesterday set to testify on the issue before a US Senate committee.

Additional reporting by Gary Cheung in New York

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<http://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/article/1259490/washington-bullying-hong-kong-extradite-me-says-edward-snowden>

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