Sojuznik Snowden: A solid Russian investment

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Oct. 15, 2013 5:08 PM | defensenews.com

The Edward Snowden case catapulted us back to the heights of the Cold War for one single reason: His story is too manicured and well-placed to be true. As the old saying goes: If it sounds too good to be true, it probably isn’t.

With the Snowden affair, many of the Russian political objectives are reached. It has has created a wedge that split the United States and Europe. Even if Vladimir Putin wears a fancy Italian suit, he is still a KGB-man, slightly better looking than the official grey suits in the heyday of the Soviet Eastern Bloc.

The European Parliament has named Snowden a finalist for the “Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought” — an irony that must have Mr. Putin laughing. Snowden’s statements are read in the European Parliament as if it was a decree from a major power — the Pope gets less attention. I assume Snowden is a potential Nobel Peace Prize winner next year. The KGB’s trademark specialty was information operations/psychological operations summarized as propaganda.

Snowden has quickly acquired the ears of Western media and many politicians, who without any doubt forward every piece they receive from Snowden to the general public.

Through the years of studying insider deviant behavior we are accustomed to seeing a series of events that lead to the insider’s betrayal of trust. Several logical steps do not fall into place in the Snowden case.

The traditional defector goes through several phases, but Snowden went directly on the job to deface the U.S. intelligence community. There was no soul searching, self-questioning or deviating character formation that led to him eventually breaking the trust he has been given.

The environment Snowden worked in had a massive number of data sources, each located at different areas in the system. If you are a regular white-collar worker in a classified organization, you do not have the knowledge to identify these assets and where they are located. The precise targeting of the stolen documents, covering not only NSA activities but also British GCHQ with 58,000 stolen classified documents, would have been a full-time job for months. Snowden must also have been able to access assets that he had no obvious need to know without triggering any suspicion or security concerns. This does not make sense. I am convinced that the vast majority of the information that Snowden presents was already in the hands of the FSB — the rebranded KGB — and the American is just the delivery vehicle and plays his part very well.

Let us instead ask if this way of telling the story is more accurate: Snowden aired dissent in online forums and social media, was identified by Russian intelligence and then approached. Snowden was at that point disappointed with the US government and, with the right compensation, he was ready to jump. They gave him an offer: money and secure way out after they ensured a free passage through China to make it less obvious. The Russians already had all the knowledge about the NSA activities Snowden revealed. This information had been gathered through still-active Russian spies within the US classified environment,
cyber breaches and traditional intelligence gathering. The FSB operatives had the whole package, the classified documents and the game plan, when they met Snowden in Hong Kong. The rest is a well-orchestrated drawn out spreading of the information FSB had.

Systematically, the Snowden operation has undermined U.S. relations with the European Union, U.K., and Latin America, and now Snowden says he will “share” documents about U.S. intelligence gathering in Italy and Spain. The Guardian has published numerous articles spreading the details of the inner workings of NSA and GCHQ.

That countries such as Bolivia and Venezuela would come out of the woodwork and offer Snowden asylum was a given without the Russians even have to ask — and it would just improve the cover up.

The Russian objectives are met and I bet there is great enjoyment in the Kremlin. We can assume that sojuznik Snowden will continue for a year or two to deliver what fits the Russian agenda – and Snowden is the best show orchestrated since the Communists infiltrated the West European peace movement’s resistance against the NATO deployment of Pershing II missiles in the early 1980s. For the Russian intelligence establishment Snowden is business as usual — deception, disinformation and psychological operations.