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Selling Edward Snowden

December 26, 2013 Vladimir Kozlov, special to RBTH

Five months since Russia granted asylum to Edward Snowden, the iconic image of the information era dissident is replicated in various forms of art, media and merchandise. RBTH offers a roundup of Snowden-related products in Russia and beyond.

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Snowden-related projects are really happening on a much larger scale. Source: Reuters

Less than a year ago, the name of [Edward Snowden](#) was totally unknown.

EDITOR'S CHOICE

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NEWS

15:28 December 26, 2013 All Arctic Sunrise crewmembers amnestied

15:03 December 26, 2013 Lithuanian company contracted to build Ramenskoe airport

14:04 December 26, 2013 Mil Mi-8 helicopter being modified to satisfy Arctic forces' needs

13:23 December 26, 2013 Russian migration service accepting visa applications from Arctic Sunrise crew

12:18 December 26, 2013 Russians support Khodorkovsky's pardon - poll

11:56 December 26, 2013 Russia will buy

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These days, however, people seem to be in a hurry to cash in on the N.S.A.-leaker's story, with books and films about him in the making and merchandise on sale.

Snowden's fame, which adds to the success of the products, received a boost when he became a temporary resident of Russia. After the documents he leaked were made public, the U.S. officials annulled Snowden's passport. The Russian government [granted him a temporary asylum](#).

Although the impact he made is worldwide, Snowden's story is also a Russian one – and, duly, products and projects that exploit Snowden's image started to appear in Russia as well as in the West.

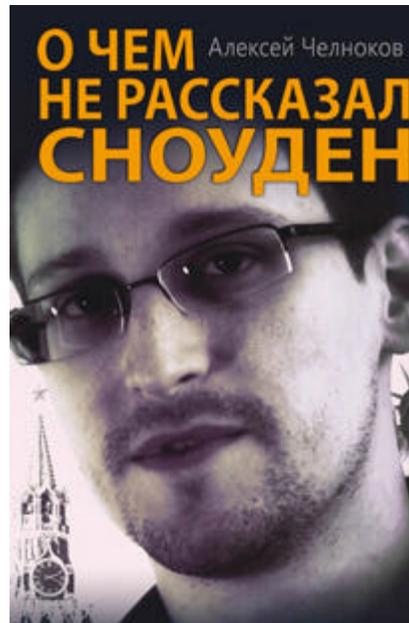
The magic name

However absurd, Snowden's name helps sell even the products that aren't related to him or his story. A nonfiction book by Alexei Chelnokov titled "O Chem Ne Rasskazal Snowden" ("What Snowden Didn't Tell About"), was published by Moscow-based Eksmo.

Despite the title and the fact that the book features a portrait of Snowden on the cover, it has nothing to do with the former U.S. contractor, using him rather as a news peg.

"What Snowden told about is just a tip of an iceberg of illegal activities by the U.S. intelligence service," reads the book's description from the publisher. "What didn't Snowden say about "dirty laundry" of secret services, which these days are taking control over politics and the economy not only in Russia?"

Snowden-themed souvenirs are also available in Russia, although demand is apparently limited.



Alexei Chelnokov. What Snowden Didn't Tell About. Source: Press Photo

foreign weapons only if it lacks similar ones of its own - Defense Minister

20:15 December 25, 2013 Moscow weather beats 1910 temperature record

19:53 December 25, 2013 Entry visas for Arctic Sunrise crew should be ready within two days - Greenpeace



PHOTO OF THE DAY



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BLOGS



The basics of the best

The online store Momo Shirts is offering T-shirts with a portrait of Snowden in the same style as a well-known, red-and-blue Barak Obama poster, with the Russian word “molodets” (“good boy”) spelled in Latin characters, at 999 rubles (about \$30).

A spokesman for the store told RBTH that sales figures on individual kinds of T-shirts are not available. Similarly, he was unable to explain how the idea of a T-shirt featuring Snowden arrived, saying it probably came from one of scores of designers the store works with.



A T-shirt with Snowden's image. Source: Press Photo

A company called Vispo has a coffee mug with a black-and-white portrait of Snowden in its catalogue. However, 190-ruble (about \$5.5) mugs don't seem to be bestsellers.

According to one Vispo employee, Alexander, when Snowden's name made the headlines just over six months ago, someone ordered to custom-print several mugs with Snowden's portrait. The company took it as a sign and included Snowden mugs into its catalogue.

“But we haven't sold more than 10 or 15 Snowden mugs in these months,” Alexander said.



Russian drinking toasts,

It is customary in Russia to propose a toast before each new round of drinks. At official events, the toasts

are usually ironic and jocular

Russian numbers and their dual meanings

Two, three, four and five are the customary designations of school marks in Russia's five-point system. Yet these numbers have additional meanings in Russian



CULTURE CALENDAR

DECEMBER

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16 October - 12 January

A group of British and Russian organisations turn young heads eastwards

17 October - 1 May

“Steppe Nirvana” - paintings by

Meanwhile, in the West, Snowden-related projects are really happening on a much larger scale.

Last August, Beijing-based electric car technology company Hong Yuan Lan Xiang said that it planned to register Snowden's name as a brand for its new "secret technology," which the company said was as groundbreaking as Snowden's leaks.

Edward as movie star

A month later, Snowden made a debut on the US cartoon series "South Park," yet in a parody form. A character named Eric Cartman was apparently based on Snowden. Incidentally, the episode, "Let Go, Let Gov," brought the series' ratings to a two-year high.

Meanwhile, as soon as next September, "Classified: The Edward Snowden Story," a dramatic thriller centered on the former NSA contractor's story, is slated for release. The Canadian crew, including actor Kevin Zegers starring as Snowden, chose crowd funding as a way to finance the independent movie.



[Russian business to trademark Snowden's image](#)

"We chose crowd funding in order to avoid oversight from a studio," Travis Doering, the producer, told RBTH. "Studios are there to make money and are a business, and like any business they often have their own agenda. We have 83 percent of our projected budget right now."

Apparently, the filmmakers expect no financial gains from the project as they plan to release the movie online as a free download.

"The whole point of this film is to educate the general public about the dangers of a mass surveillance program," Doering said. "Not everyone will read the news, but for the most part, people will watch an entertaining film. Releasing it for free makes it more available to everyone in the world."

The book industry could not overlook the Snowden phenomenon, either. Three books on Snowden are reportedly in the process of being written.

The publisher Metropolitan Books has announced a book by The Guardian's

Zorikto Dorzhiev

18-27 December

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The Voice of Russia



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[British intelligence anxious to catch Snowden in Russia](#)



[Secret KGB alien civilizations project](#)

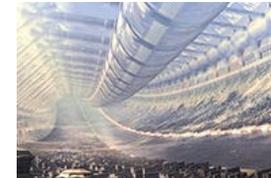


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Full story: Edward Snowden

journalist Glenn Greenwald, to whom Snowden originally leaked secret materials. The publisher's announcement promises "new revelations exposing the extraordinary cooperation of private industry."

20th Century Fox, Sony Pictures Entertainment and [cable TV network HBO](#) are reported to have approached Greenwald about film rights, but no deal has been struck yet.

Meanwhile, Barton Gellman, a former Washington Post reporter, and another Guardian journalist, Luke Harding, are also reportedly working on books about Snowden.

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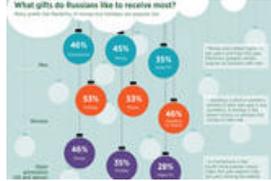


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