

# Gov't won't classify proxies as 'sophisticated' (Update)

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(AP) -- The U.S. government has dropped - for now - a plan to classify the use of "proxy" servers as evidence of sophistication in committing a crime.

Proxy servers are computers that disguise the source of [Internet traffic](#). They are commonly used for legitimate purposes, like evading Internet censors and working from home. But they can also be used to hide from law enforcement.

The Washington-based U.S. Sentencing Commission was considering a change to federal sentencing guidelines that would have increased sentences by about 25 percent for people convicted of crimes in which proxies are used to hide the perpetrators' tracks.

But after digital-rights advocates complained that the proposed language was too broad, the commission struck the controversial language from the amendments it voted on Wednesday.

The commission declined to comment, saying it hasn't yet submitted to Congress its formal reasons for the amendment language.

The Justice Department supported the proposed amendment as a way to hand down stiffer sentences for people who set up elaborate proxy networks - sometimes in multiple countries - to commit crimes and hide their identities.

Detectives often hit a dead end in following a criminal's Internet traffic through a big proxy network because it's hard to win cooperation from some foreign governments and Internet providers to get access to the proxy computers used as relay points.

Digital-rights advocates said the amendment would have sent a chilling message about using a common technology that is often encouraged as a safer way of using the Internet. They wanted language clarifying that the amendment only applied to people who used a proxy specifically to commit a crime.

A proxy only broadcasts its own numeric Internet Protocol address to the outside world, while the IP address of the person routing traffic through it disappears. Tapping into legitimate proxy networks is relatively easy, since many companies offer the service online for free.

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