

Brazil seeks UN move vs. electronic surveillance

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Brazil said Friday it is working with other countries to draft a U.N. General Assembly resolution that would guarantee people's privacy in electronic communications. That follows a series of reports of alleged U.S. eavesdropping on foreign leaders and others that has surprised and angered allies.

Brazil's President Dilma Rousseff has been especially outspoken. She even took the rare step of canceling a state visit to Washington after classified documents leaked by former National Security Agency analyst Edward Snowden showed that the NSA hacked the computer network of Brazil's state-run oil company Petrobras and scooped up data on emails and telephone calls flowing through the country.

Latin American and European diplomats, speaking on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly, said Brazil and Germany were leading efforts on the draft resolution. German Chancellor Angela Merkel and other European leaders expressed anger this week after reports that the NSA allegedly monitored Merkel's cell phone and swept up millions of French telephone records.

The General Assembly resolution would be nonbinding, but it would be seen as another expression of disapproval of the alleged U.S. spying.

On Friday, Brazil's Foreign Ministry confirmed that Brazil is drafting a U.N. resolution.

"What I can tell you is that the Brazilian Mission in the United Nations has drawn up a proposal calling for the right to privacy on the Internet," said a ministry press officer, who declined to be named, citing internal regulations.

Washington has contended that it is necessary to intercept vast amounts of electronic data to effectively fight terrorism, but the White House has said it is examining countries' concerns as part of an ongoing review of how the U.S. gathers intelligence

A diplomat with a major European nation, speaking on condition of anonymity because the draft resolution's language was in an early stage, expected easy passage in the General Assembly because the resolution would not have language that would be "offensive" to any nation, particularly the United States.

The diplomat said the resolution would expand the right to privacy guaranteed by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which went into force in 1976.

The draft would be forwarded within the week to the General Assembly subcommittee that deals with social, humanitarian, cultural and human rights issues, and then to the full General Assembly for consideration in late November.

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