

# Snowden seeks the world's help against US charges (Update)

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Opposition Greens lawmaker Hans-Christian Stroebale, shows a letter to the media, he claims he received from Edward Snowden, prior to a press conference in Berlin, Germany, Friday, Nov. 1, 2013. Stroebale said he met Edward Snowden in Moscow on Thursday, and that the National Security Agency leaker is prepared to help Germany investigate allegations of surveillance by U.S. intelligence. Snowden was granted asylum in Russia in August after being stuck at a Moscow airport for more than a month following his arrival there from Hong Kong. The 30-year-old faces espionage charges in the U.S. (AP Photo/Michael Sohn)

The U.S. refused to show any leniency to fugitive leaker Edward

Snowden on Friday, even as Secretary of State John Kerry conceded that eavesdropping on allies had happened on "automatic pilot" and went too far.

Snowden made his appeal for U.S. clemency in a letter released Friday by a German lawmaker who met with him in Moscow. In it, the 30-year-old American asked for international help to persuade the U.S. to drop spying charges against him and said he would like to testify before the U.S. Congress about the National Security Agency's surveillance activities.

Snowden also indicated he would be willing to help German officials investigate alleged U.S. spying in Germany, said Hans-Christian Stroebale, a lawmaker with the opposition Green Party and a member of the parliamentary committee that oversees German intelligence.

Stroebale met with Snowden for three hours on Thursday, a week after explosive allegations that the NSA had monitored Chancellor Angela Merkel's cellphone prompted her to complain personally to President Barack Obama. The alleged spying has produced the most serious diplomatic tensions between the two allies since Germany opposed the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003.

In his one-page typed letter, written in English and bearing signatures that Stroebale said were his own and Snowden's, the American complained that the U.S. government "continues to treat dissent as defection, and seeks to criminalize political speech with felony charges that provide no defense."

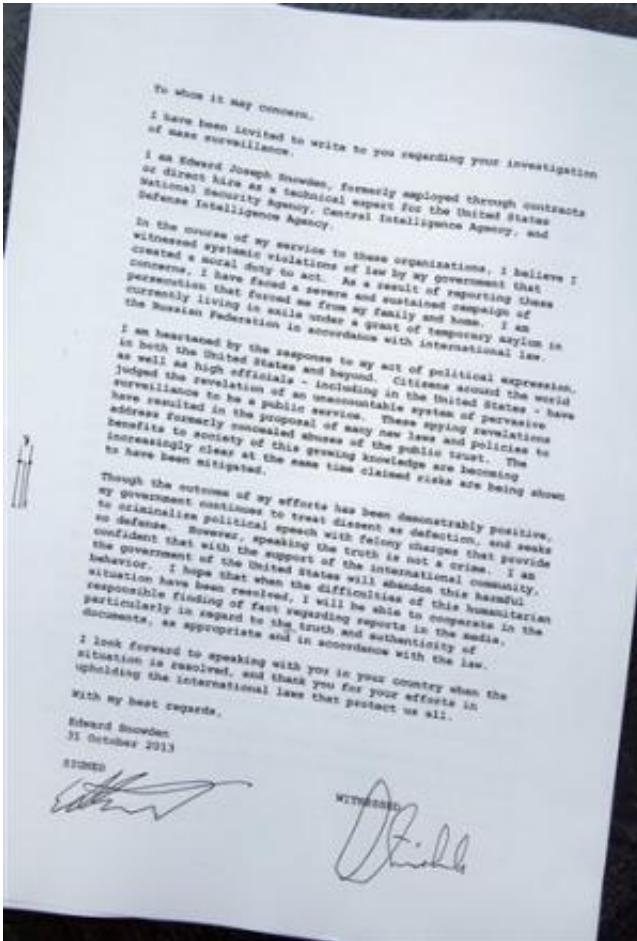
"However, speaking the truth is not a crime," Snowden wrote. "I am confident that with the support of the international community, the government of the United States will abandon this harmful behavior."

In Washington, State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki would not respond directly to Snowden's appeal, but said the U.S. position "has not changed."

"Despite recent reports or recent pronouncements from Mr. Snowden, as we've stated many times before, he's accused of leaking classified information, faces felony charges here in the United States and we believe he should be returned as soon as possible, where he will be accorded full due process and protections applicable under U.S. law," Psaki said.

Snowden's father, Lon Snowden, who recently visited his son in Russia and continues to communicate with him, told The Associated Press on Friday that Snowden will not travel to Germany to talk to authorities as long as the U.S. charges remain in place.

"If they want to understand my son's position about Germany, read his letter. It's pretty clear. He is not going to Germany to testify as long as he is indicted by the United States and their position is what it is," the elder Snowden said, adding that his son would prefer to testify before Congress anyway.



Opposition Greens lawmaker Hans-Christian Stroebale, shows a copy of a letter to the media, he claims he received from Edward Snowden, prior to a press conference in Berlin, Germany, Friday, Nov. 1, 2013. Stroebale said he met Edward Snowden in Moscow on Thursday, and that the National Security Agency leaker is prepared to help Germany investigate allegations of surveillance by U.S. intelligence. Snowden was granted asylum in Russia in August after being stuck at a Moscow airport for more than a month following his arrival there from Hong Kong. The 30-year-old faces espionage charges in the U.S. (AP Photo/Michael Sohn)

"My son would love to come back to the United States but I'm not sure it will be safe for him, even if all charges are dropped," Lon Snowden said. "My advice would be to stay in Russia and move on with his life, and

that's what I believe he will do."

Stroebele said Edward Snowden appeared healthy and cheerful during their meeting at an undisclosed location in Moscow. The German television network ARD, which accompanied Stroebele, said the Germans were taken to the meeting by unidentified security officials under "strict secrecy."

Snowden "said that he would like most to lay the facts on the table before a committee of the U.S. Congress and explain them," Stroebele said. The lawmaker, a prominent critic of the NSA's alleged activities, said Snowden "did not present himself to me as anti-American or anything like that—quite the contrary."

Merkel this week sent German officials to Washington for talks on the spying issue. Germany's parliament also is expected to discuss the NSA's alleged spying on Nov. 18.

Snowden's appeal came as Kerry conceded that because of modern technology, some NSA activities had gone too far and were carried out without the knowledge of Obama administration officials.

"The president and I have learned of some things that have been happening, in many ways on an automatic pilot, because the technology is there," Kerry said Thursday, speaking in a video link to an open government conference in London.

"In some cases, some of these actions have reached too far and we are going to try to make sure it doesn't happen in the future," Kerry said, adding that ongoing reviews of U.S. surveillance will ensure that technology is not being abused.

Snowden was granted a one-year asylum in Russia in August after being

stuck at a Moscow airport for more than a month following his arrival from Hong Kong. Russian President Vladimir Putin has said Snowden got asylum on condition that he wouldn't harm U.S. interests.



In this March 13, 2013 file picture, German Interior Minister Hans-Peter Friedrich briefs the media in Berlin. Friedrich says he will try to organize a meeting between German investigators and Edward Snowden if he's willing to give details about the National Security Agency's alleged monitoring of Chancellor Angela Merkel's communications. Friedrich was quoted by Die Zeit newspaper Friday Nov. 1, 2013 saying that "we will find a way, if Mr. Snowden is willing to talk." His spokesman Jens Teschke confirmed the comments, saying "we want clarification and we want further information." He said he assumed such a meeting would be in Russia. Opposition Greens lawmaker Hans-Christian Stroebale said he met with Snowden in Moscow on Thursday and that he was prepared to travel to Germany to testify. (AP Photo/Markus Schreiber, File)

Snowden's exact whereabouts in Russia and his activities there have been a mystery, though there has been wide speculation that he is under the control of Russia's security services.

Stroebele was tightlipped about where he met Snowden. The German politician said he had no contact with the German Embassy in Moscow nor with Russian authorities other than a passport control officer—although he did not explain who the security officials mentioned by German television were.

Snowden's lawyer says his client has accepted a technical-support job with a major Russian website but refused to name it.

"He enjoys living in Russia. ... We have opportunities to visit cultural events. We have opportunities to show him our places of interest," attorney Anatoly Kucherena said.

He also said Snowden is studying Russian and has developed some competency in it.

The Russian news site Life News on Thursday published a photo showing Snowden on a boat in the Moscow River with the Christ the Savior Cathedral in the background. It said the photo was taken in September.

"It's him," Kucherena told the AP on Friday.

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