

Germany rejects Snowden claim it bowed to NSA (Update)

March 10 2014, by Frank Jordans



Claudia Breidbach, right, demonstrates a bionic hand that is steerable by a mobile phone to German Chancellor Angela Merkel and British Prime Minister David Cameron, center, during the opening day of the computer fair CeBIT in Hannover, Germany, Monday, March 10, 2014. Great Britain is the partner country at this year's CeBIT which runs through March 14.(AP Photo/Frank Augstein)

Germany on Monday dismissed a claim by NSA leaker Edward Snowden

that it had bowed to U.S. demands to water down privacy rights for German citizens.

Snowden told the European Parliament in a statement published Friday that Germany was pressured to modify its legislation on wiretapping and other forms of lawful telecoms surveillance. The former National Security Agency contractor didn't elaborate on how the laws were changed or when, but suggested it was standard practice for the NSA to instruct friendly nations on how to "degrade the legal protections of their countries' communications."

"Laws are made by the German parliament and it doesn't give in to outside pressure, certainly not from foreign spy agencies, and that's true in this case too," government spokesman Steffen Seibert said.

Snowden's claim is particularly sensitive for Germany. While Chancellor Angela Merkel's government has been among the loudest critics of the NSA's reported surveillance of foreign citizens—including Merkel herself—domestic critics say German spy agencies collaborated closely with their American counterparts in ways that may have breached Germany's strict data protection laws.



German chancellor Angela Merkel, right, talks with British Prime Minister David Cameron, center, while Volkswagen CEO, Martin Winterkorn, left, looks on , during the opening ceremony of the CeBIT computer fair in Hannover, Germany, Sunday March 9, 2014. (AP Photo/dpa,: Swen Pfoertner)

Snowden claims the NSA took advantage of different legal systems across Europe to eavesdrop on calls and emails across the continent.

Speaking at the opening of the world's biggest technology trade fair in Hannover late Sunday, Merkel called for European Union countries to harmonize their data protection laws, and make the issue a central part of talks with Washington over a free trade agreement.

Her proposal was backed by Neelie Kroes, vice president of the European Commission, who said Europe could gain a competitive advantage by making digital privacy a priority.

"Snowden gave us a wake-up call," she said. "Let's not snooze through it."

More information: Snowden's statement to the European Parliament:
bit.ly/1cCa5gl

© 2014 The Associated Press. All rights reserved.

Citation: Germany rejects Snowden claim it bowed to NSA (Update) (2014, March 10) retrieved 23 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2014-03-germany-snowden-nsa.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.