

Inquiry says Snowden in contact with Russia's spy services

December 22 2016, by Richard Lardner



In this Feb. 14, 2015 file photo, Edward Snowden appears on a live video feed broadcast from Moscow at an event sponsored by ACLU Hawaii in Honolulu. A declassified report on a congressional investigation into Edward Snowden says the former National Security Agency contractor has remained in contact with Russian intelligence services since he arrived in Moscow three years ago. The House Intelligence committee released the report Thursday. (AP Photo/Marco Garcia, File)

Former National Security Agency contractor Edward Snowden has remained in contact with Russian intelligence services since he arrived in Moscow three years ago, according to a declassified report on a congressional investigation released Thursday.

The House intelligence committee released the [report](#) to provide what the panel's chairman called "a fuller account of Edward Snowden's crimes and the reckless disregard he has shown for U.S. [national security](#)."

In a rare example of bipartisanship, the panel's top Republican and Democrat joined in castigating Snowden, who in 2013 revealed U.S. government efforts to hack into the data pipelines used by U.S. companies to serve customers overseas. The programs collected the telephone metadata records of millions of Americans and examined emails from overseas.

Snowden fled to Hong Kong and then to Russia to avoid prosecution.

Rep. Devin Nunes, R-Calif., the committee chairman, said it "will take a long time to mitigate the damage" Snowden caused.

The committee's top Democrat, Rep. Adam Schiff of California, said Snowden isn't a whistleblower as he and his defenders claim. "Most of the material he stole had nothing to do with Americans' privacy, and its compromise has been of great value to America's adversaries and those who mean to do America harm," Schiff said.

Release of the report comes as the intelligence community has accused Russia of interfering in the U.S. elections. Snowden's supporters have pressed President Barack Obama to pardon him before he leaves office in late January. But the details in the intelligence committee's report, coupled with the intense focus on Russia's hacking of Democratic

emails, could doom the push for a pardon.

Lisa Monaco, Obama's adviser on homeland security and counterterrorism, said last year that Snowden "should come home to the United States and be judged by a jury of his peers—not hide behind the cover of an authoritarian regime. Right now, he's running away from the consequences of his actions."

The report pointed to statements in June 2016 by the deputy chairman of the defense and security committee in the Russian parliament's upper house, who asserted that "Snowden did share intelligence" with the Russian government.

Ben Wizner, Snowden's lawyer, dismissed the report and insisted that Snowden acted to inform the public.

"The House committee spent three years and millions of dollars in a failed attempt to discredit Edward Snowden, whose actions led to the most significant [intelligence](#) reforms in a generation," Wizner said. "The report wholly ignores Snowden's repeated and courageous criticism of Russian surveillance and censorship laws. It combines demonstrable falsehoods with deceptive inferences to paint an entirely fictional portrait of an American whistleblower."

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