


Snowden denies he got help from Russia in leaking U.S. secrets: report

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WASHINGTON (Reuters) - Former U.S. spy agency contractor Edward Snowden said he acted alone in leaking U.S. government secrets and that suggestions by some U.S. lawmakers he might have had help from Russia were "absurd," the New Yorker magazine reported on Tuesday.

In an interview the magazine said was conducted by encrypted means from Moscow, Snowden was quoted as saying, "This 'Russian spy' push is absurd."

Snowden said he "clearly and unambiguously acted alone, with no help from anyone, much less a government," the New Yorker said.

"It won't stick. ... Because it's clearly false, and the American people are smarter than politicians think they are," the publication quoted Snowden as saying.

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The head of the U.S. House of Representatives Intelligence Committee said on Sunday he was investigating whether Snowden had help from Russia in stealing and revealing U.S. government secrets.

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"I believe there's a reason he ended up in the hands - the loving arms - of an FSB agent in Moscow. I don't think that's a coincidence," Representative Mike Rogers told NBC's "Meet the Press," referring to the Russian intelligence agency that is a successor of the Soviet-era KGB.

Rogers did not provide specific evidence to back his suggestions of Russian involvement in Snowden's activities, but said, "Some of the things we're finding we would call clues that certainly would indicate to me that he had some help."

Snowden fled the United States last year to Hong Kong and then to Russia, where he was granted at least a year of asylum. U.S. officials want him returned to the United States for prosecution. His disclosures of large numbers of stolen U.S. secret documents sparked a debate around the world about the reach of U.S. electronic surveillance.

Other U.S. security officials told Reuters as recently as last week that the United States had no evidence that Snowden had any confederates who assisted him or guided him about what National Security Agency materials to hack or how to do so.

Snowden told the New York Times in October he did not take any secret NSA documents with him to Russia when he fled there in June 2013. "There's a zero percent chance the Russians or Chinese have received any documents," Snowden told the Times.

Snowden said in the New Yorker interview that if he were a Russian spy, "Why Hong Kong?" and why was he stuck for a lengthy period in Moscow's airport before being allowed to stay in the country.

"Spies get treated better than that," he said.