

No wire requests received: Switzerland

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Former president Chen Shui-bian's (陳水扁) son Chen Chih-chung (陳智雄) said yesterday he had tried everything possible to wire the money connected to the corruption allegations leveled at his family back to Taiwan, rebutting recent comments by Swiss authorities who said no such requests have been received.

On Saturday, Folco Galli, spokesperson for the Swiss Justice Ministry, said the ministry had not received any requests from Chen Chih-chung or members of his family to wire funds the Chen family kept overseas back to Taiwan.

Galli confirmed that last year, Taiwanese prosecutors requested judicial mutual assistance from Swiss prosecution authorities, but declined to comment further on specifics regarding the bank accounts. Contrary to Taiwanese prosecutors' claims that they asked Swiss authorities to unfreeze the funds and wire them back to Taiwan, Galli also said Taiwanese prosecutors had not submitted any requests to wire the funds back to Taiwan.

As of yet, none of the money has been remitted.

When the former president's corruption and money laundering cases were still being tried at the Taipei District Court, Chen Chih-chung and his wife Huang Jui-ching (黃菊晶) had promised to wire about NT\$1.2 billion (US\$36.6 million) in Swiss bank accounts belonging to the family and paper companies to Taiwan as part of conditions to enter plea-bargaining.

The Supreme Prosecutors' Office's Special Investigation Panel (SIP) prosecutors had charged the young couple with money laundering for helping to wire funds overseas and establish paper companies with the intent of laundering the funds. Although Chen Chih-chung and his wife confessed to the charges against them to enter plea-bargaining and request leniency during sentencing, they had repeatedly emphasized they were only following instructions from Chen Chih-chung's mother, Wu Shu-jen (吳淑珍).

Yeh Ta-hui (葉大衛), a lawyer for the couple, rebutted Galli's comments. He said Chen Chih-chung and his wife had asked the SIP and Swiss authorities to wire the funds to Taiwan, and their willingness to return the money never changed.

Chen Chih-chung submitted documents to the Swiss Federal Prosecutor's office, not the Swiss Justice Ministry, Yeh said.

In response to Galli's comments, SIP spokesperson Chen Yun-nan (陳運南) only said prosecutors had requested judicial assistance from Swiss authorities, but declined to elaborate.

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