

US Ambassador to Austria Responsible for False Claim Snowden Was on Bolivian Leader's Plane: Report

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The Austrian daily newspaper, Die Presse, has reported that the United States ambassador to Austria was responsible for making false claims that National Security Agency whistleblower Edward Snowden was on board Bolivian President Evo Morales' plane.

In a story published on July 3, the newspaper reported shortly after Morales' plane landed the "Vienna foreign department received a phone call." The caller was the US ambassador to Austria, William Eacho.

According to Die Presse, Eacho "claimed with great certainty that Edward Snowden was onboard." He also made reference to a "diplomatic note requesting Snowden's extradition."

The Associated Press reported on July 2 that Morales' plane had been rerouted to Austria after European countries would not allow it to fly over their airspace because they suspected Snowden might be on board. The countries included Spain, France, Portugal and Italy.

Morales' plane ended up landing in Austria to refuel, and, according to Morales, "While the plane was parked in Vienna, the Spanish ambassador to Austria arrived with two embassy personnel and they asked to search the plane. He said he denied them permission." But, Austrian officials apparently [searched](#) the plane. (The Guardian's Glenn Greenwald [reported](#) Austrian police walked through the plane but did not search it.)

The Guardian [reported](#), as of July 5:

Spain says it and other European countries were told that the NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden was on board the Bolivian presidential plane that was diverted to Austria this week, causing a diplomatic row.

The foreign minister, José Manuel García-Margallo, said on Spanish National Television on Friday that "they told us that the information was clear, that he was inside".

The minister did not say who supplied the information and declined to say whether he had been in contact with the United States. But he said European countries' reactions were based on this information.

Ministers of the European countries appear to have their instructions from the United States government, if the report in Die Presse is accurate, to be silent and participate in covering up what really happened.

Bolivian Defense Minister Ruben Saavedra [declared](#) hours after the incident, in an interview with CNN, "The US government was behind the rumors that Snowden was on board." And,

“This is a lie, a falsehood. It was generated by the US government.”

“It is an outrage. It is an abuse. It is a violation of the conventions and agreements of international air transportation,” Saavedra said. Bolivian Vice President Alvaro Garcia went so far as to say Morales had been “kidnapped by imperialism.”

Spokeswoman Jen Psaki stated at a briefing, “We have been in contact with a range of countries that had a chance of having Snowden land or travel through their country but I am not going to outline what those countries were or when this [contact] happened.”

The report in Die Presse is the only report to name Eacho as responsible for the false claim. It, however, has not been denied in any news reports either.

President Barack Obama nominated Eacho to be ambassador in June 2009. Prior to that, he [had not served in any diplomatic position](#). He had a background in real estate investment as CEO of Carlton Capital Group, LLC, and food service distribution as Vice President of Alliant Foodservice Inc. He was one of Obama’s biggest campaign fundraisers. His contribution to Obama’s election was [rewarded](#) with an ambassadorship.

Eacho apparently did [an interview](#) with Die Presse where he minimized the revelations on the NSA saying something to the effect that European Union member states are all involved in efforts to address security threats.

He said something to the effect that people voluntarily give more information about themselves to Facebook than the NSA collects data about them. Police are able to access the data they need and care is taken to protect civil rights and privacy. He also said that Americans residing in the US do not have to worry about someone reading their emails.

What makes the incident even more remarkable is that Morales was never at the Moscow airport where Snowden has been stuck for over a week now. He departed from Vnukovo Airport, which is twenty-seven miles away.

This suggests the lengths the Obama administration is willing to go to ensure Snowden does not end up anywhere that will grant him asylum. As a result, Latin American countries are furious and Bolivia is threatening to close the United States’ embassy in Bolivia over an act he considers a violation of international law.

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