

Bolivian President's Plane Diverted Over Snowden

By [The Moscow Times](#)

July 03, 2013

The  Moscow Times

Bolivian President Evo Morales' plane was forced to land in Austria after France and Portugal refused to let the jet cross their airspace amid false rumors that Edward Snowden was on board, the Bolivian foreign minister was quoted as saying.

Snowden, a former contractor for the US National Security Agency, is wanted by the U.S. for disclosing a top-secret surveillance program that allegedly targeted millions of Americans. He is believed to be in Moscow.

"We are told that there were some unfounded suspicions that Mr. Snowden was on the plane," Bolivian Foreign Minister David Choquehuanca said, according to CNN.

"We do not know who has invented this lie, someone who wants to harm our country," Choquehuanca said. "The information that has been circulated is malicious information to harm this country."

The foreign minister said the move had put the life of Morales, who visited Russia for a gas exporting conference, at risk. "Portugal owes us an explanation. France owes us an explanation," he said.

Bolivian Defense Minister Ruben Saavedra told CNN en Español that he thought the U.S. government was behind the rumors.

"This is a lie, a falsehood. It was generated by the U.S. government," he said, adding that Bolivia's air travel rights were violated.

Ecuadorian Foreign Minister Ricardo Patino said he planned to call a regional meeting of the Union of South American Nations, or Unasur, to discuss the situation, according to CNN.

The United States is communicating with several countries that could offer Snowden political asylum — or act as a stopover — about his possible return home to face criminal charges, a U.S. State Department spokeswoman said Tuesday.

Washington has spoken with "a broad range of countries" that could either serve as "transit spots or final destinations" for Snowden, who is holed up in the transit zone of Moscow's Sheremetyevo Airport while trying to elude U.S. authorities, State Department spokeswoman Jennifer Psaki told a news briefing.

Bolivia and Venezuela have expressed possible support for Snowden, but 11 of the 21 governments that WikiLeaks says he has applied to for political asylum have said he must be on their respective territories before making a request, CNN reported Tuesday.

Three of the countries — Brazil, India and Poland — have rejected his request outright.

Snowden had asked for asylum in Russia, but a Kremlin spokesman said Tuesday that the American withdrew his request after President Vladimir Putin publicly stated Monday that Snowden must stop "harming our U.S. partners" with the leaks.

The United States has revoked Snowden's passport, but U.S. officials have said Washington would issue him a one-time travel document in order to travel home to face a "free and fair trial."

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