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Kremlin Denies Link Between Argentinian Cocaine Scandal and Presidential Plane

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Viktor Lukyanov

The Kremlin has denied reports that cocaine was being smuggled from Argentina aboard a presidential aircraft used by high-ranking state officials.

Earlier this month, Argentina arrested six people suspected of running a cocaine smuggling ring between the Russian Embassy in Buenos Aires and Moscow. The aircraft used in the drug run, shown in footage released by Argentinean law enforcement, was identified as a Russian diplomatic plane, the RBC business portal reported Monday.

Related article: Russian Embassy in Argentina Caught Up in Cocaine Smuggling Probe

A spokesperson at the Russian Office of Presidential Affairs, which operates the presidential fleet, told Interfax on Tuesday that media reports linking the Russian diplomatic plane to the

cocaine scandal were not true.

“Journalists have drawn conclusions based on inaccurate information, in this case, photographs that can easily be falsified with modern technology,” the spokesperson, Yelena Krylova, was cited as saying.

The Russianplanes.net plane-tracking website that RBC cited in tracing the ownership of the Ilyushin Il-96-300 airliner that was linked to the heist went offline shortly after the RBC report.

Nearly 400 kilograms of cocaine were replaced with flour and fitted with a tracking device during Argentina's joint operation with Russia to clamp down on the drug smugglers.

Russia is holding three suspects of the drug smuggling case in pretrial detention, while a former embassy staffer thought to be the mastermind of the group has fled to Germany, Interfax reported.

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