

German Police Arrest Suspected Mastermind in Russian Embassy Cocaine Scandal

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Handout / Reuters

German police have arrested the suspected mastermind of a busted drug smuggling operation that reportedly ran hundreds of kilograms of cocaine from South America to Moscow on a Russian presidential plane.

Six people were arrested after nearly 400 kilograms of cocaine were discovered at the Russian Embassy school grounds in Buenos Aires, authorities said last week. The man who allegedly supplied the drugs, initially identified as “Mr. K” and later [named](#) as Andrei Kovalchuk, was [reported](#) to be in hiding in Germany after the story broke.

Related article: [Russian Embassy in Argentina Caught Up in Cocaine Smuggling Probe](#)

“His wife called me and said that Kovalchuk was detained as part of the criminal case on

narcotics,” Interfax [cited](#) Kovalchuk’s lawyer Vladimir Zherebenkov as saying Friday.

“As expected, the police intend to go to court for his arrest,” he added.

An unnamed Russian law enforcement official [told](#) the Rosbalt news agency on Monday that Kovalchuk had previously been employed as a staff member at the Russian Embassy in Berlin.

Russia’s Foreign Ministry released a statement Tuesday [denying](#) that Kovalchuk was ever employed by Russia’s diplomatic missions in Germany and “in general never worked for the Foreign Ministry.”

Before his arrest, Kovalchuk [claimed](#) that he had been set-up in a “well-organized provocation” by American authorities, saying that his Argentinian suitcases with coffee, cigars and alcohol had been replaced by cocaine.

“Kovalchuk is convinced that the drugs were planted by Argentine police with U.S. special services participating in this provocation in order to discredit the Russian diplomatic mission,” Zherebenkov [told](#) Interfax on Wednesday.

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