

NSA Spying on Venezuela: Post-Chavez Elections and Petroleum Industry Were Priorities

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Brazilian daily O Globo, reporting jointly with Guardian journalist Glenn Greenwald [informed](#) today that according to the leaked National Security Agency (NSA) documents, the United States has also been spying on Venezuela's petroleum industry. The information comes as governments confirm that whistleblower Edward Snowden has applied for asylum in Venezuela.

According to the leaked documents, the NSA also spied on other Latin American countries such as Mexico, Argentina, Colombia, and Ecuador.

O Globo reports that, "The United States doesn't seem to be only interested in military affairs, but also in commercial secrets, such as Venezuela's petroleum".

According to the documents, NSA spied on Latin America through at least two programs, the Prism program from 2-8 of February this year, and the "Informant Without Limits" program from January to March.

One document describes Operation Silverzephyr, which accessed information through partnerships with private satellite and phone operators, focusing on Latin American countries. The document shows that the NSA agency collected information through telephone calls, faxes and emails, possibly using the program Fairview.

According to O Globo and the leaked NSA documents, Venezuela was also observed in 2008 through the X-Keyscore program, which identifies the presence of foreigners according to the language they use in emails. Further, in March this year it appears that Venezuela was a priority for the NSA's spying. President Hugo Chavez died on 5 March, and presidential elections were called for 14 April.

U.S. reacts to Venezuela's asylum offer

On Sunday U.S. legislators suggested sanctioning countries which grant asylum to Edward Snowden, who leaked the NSA documents to The Guardian. The chair of the U.S. House of Representative's intelligence committee, Mike Rogers, said Latin American countries are "using Snowden as a public relations tool... we shouldn't allow this... it's a serious issue...some Latin American companies enjoy trade benefits from the United States and we're going to have to revise that".

Legislator Robert Menendez also said that any "acceptance of Snowden" would put that country "directly against the United States". The Venezuelan government formally offered

Snowden asylum on 5 July. Nicaragua and Bolivia have also done so.

"We've made very clear that he [Snowden] has been charged with felonies and as such, he should not be allowed to proceed in any further international travel other than travel that would result in him returning to the United States," White House Press Secretary Jay Carney told reporters yesterday at his daily news conference.

Yesterday Maduro said that Venezuela has also formally received an asylum request from Snowden, who agencies report to have been in the Moscow airport since 23 June.

Russian legislator Alexei Pushkov also confirmed yesterday (via a Tweet that he later deleted) that Snowden had accepted Venezuela's offer of political asylum. "It seems that that is the option he feels is safest," Pushkov wrote. However, later today Wikileaks also tweeted that Snowden had not formally accepted asylum in Venezuela, but also deleted the tweets a few minutes later.

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