



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on December 22, 2011

Several European Countries Accused of Hiding Info on CIA Rendition Flights

Persons accused by the U.S. government of being "enemy combatants" were subject to "extraordinary rendition": capture and shipment off to one of the so-called "black site" secret prisons for questioning, where the detainees were often reportedly subjected to inhuman tactics to elicit responses from them.



"Black sites" is the name given to the officially unconfirmed network of secret prisons located throughout the world used by the CIA to imprison and interrogate individuals suspected of committing or conspiring to commit terrorist activities.

These facilities are built outside of the jurisdiction of the U.S. government and thus are not subject to American laws against torture.

The two organizations, Reprieve (a multinational group focusing on providing legal aid to those facing the death penalty) and Access Info Europe (an entity that seeks to obtain information to aid in the protection of civil liberties) released their [findings as part of a larger investigation](#) into the requests made in 28 countries to provide information relating to their participation in the "extraordinary rendition" program.

[According to the Associated Press](#) (AP), "The groups said only seven (Denmark, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Lithuania, Norway, and the United States) of 28 countries had supplied the requested information. Five countries (Estonia, UK, Bulgaria, Slovenia, and the Czech Republic) said they no longer had the data, three refused to release it (Canada, Portugal, and Sweden) and 13 others had not replied more than 10 weeks after the requests were made."

[Swedish media](#) related the alleged role played by that nation in the rendition program:

One incident when a CIA plane touched down on Swedish soil, receiving significant attention in Swedish media, was the flight transporting Egyptians Mohammad Alzery and Ahmed Agiza from the Bromma airport in Stockholm to Egypt in 2001, where they later were tortured in prison.

Sweden has previously been slammed by human rights organizations about its part in the incident.

The actions of the Swedish security service Säpo has [sic] been criticized but the highest authority belonged to Sweden's foreign minister at the time, Anna Lindh.

In addition to the three countries that flatly denied the requests for information, European Organisation for the Safety of Air Navigation (EUROCONTROL), the civil organization that coordinates and plans air traffic control for all of Europe, also rebuffed the requests for details regarding traffic of aircraft involved in rendition transportation.



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In [a story covering the release of the report](#), Reprieve investigator Crofton Black was quoted as saying that Eurocontrol's refusal to provide the requested data was "a shocking indictment of European complacency." Concluding that "while the US will gladly release over 27,000 records, Europe's air traffic manager Eurocontrol won't even release one. It's equally unacceptable that countries such as Austria, France, Italy, Latvia, Romania and Spain simply ignore requests for data relating to serious rights abuses."

The 13 countries that have yet failed to make any acknowledgement of the requests for information were reprimanded in the report for "covering up the serious violations of the human rights of those who were the victims of extraordinary rendition."

The report called out the governments of the uncooperative European nations for their lack of transparency and the resulting impact on basic human rights.

The organizations behind the study pleaded with "all European countries[]" governments to take urgent steps to publish all the information that they hold about renditions flights, including flight data and related documents, and to make this available in a reusable open data format to the civil society organisations working to map out the full extent of renditions."

Access to such information, they insist, is a "fundamental right in itself, as has been recognised by the European Court of Human Rights and the UN Human Rights Committee. It is also an instrumental right, essential for the protection of other human rights. Information concerning grave infringements of human rights should never be withheld from the public."

Additionally and perhaps surprisingly given the nature of the requests, Reprieve and Access Info Europe reported that the United States was much more enlightened than the countries of Europe when it came to practicing principles of transparency.

Details published in the report praised the Federal Aviation Administration for having cooperated with the requests. In less than two months after the submission of the requests, the FAA delivered a spreadsheet of 27,128 rows of data on the movements of 44 planes between 2002 and 2006.

Many of the flights in question merely passed through European air space or used airports on the continent for layovers between other destinations around the world.

However, [credible stories](#) have been published claiming that several of the CIA's black site holding facilities are actually physically located on the soil of some of the European nations mentioned in the report.

In fact, recently the AP teamed with German investigative reporters from the public television network ARD, and the German newspaper *Sueddeutsche Zeitung* in conducting an investigation that allegedly uncovered one of these detention sites in Romania.

Reportedly, former CIA operatives led the reporters to the building. In fact, the AP story states that "former intelligence officials both described the location of the prison and identified pictures of the building."

Romania was first suspected in 2005 of being host to one of the CIA secret prisons, but denials were issued by all who were believed to have knowledge of the facility.

Despite the denials, however, the story began to unfold in 2007 after an investigation by the Council of Europe called out Romania for having permitted a prison to have been operated in its territory. Again, denial followed denial, from Washington and Bucharest.



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In fact, the Romanian Foreign Affairs Minister stated at the time of the council's investigation, "No public official or other person acting in an official capacity has been involved in the unacknowledged deprivation of any individual, or transport of any individual while so deprived of their liberty."

The Legal Affairs Committee of the Council of Europe released a document in 2006 that sparked the wider inquiry. In the report issued by the Legal Affairs Committee, 14 nations in Europe were accused of collaborating with the CIA by either permitting the prisons to be run in their countries or aiding in the facilitating of "extraordinary rendition" flights.

One of the investigators who contributed to the Council of Europe report, Dick Marty, warmly greeted the news of the reported discovery of the CIA rendition location in Romania. "The dynamic of truth has run its course and we are at last beginning to learn what really happened in Bucharest," said Marty.

Regardless of the crimes with which the detainees were charged by the CIA, there exists the basic right of habeas corpus and a hearing on the merit of the charges before an impartial judge.

The justification cited by the government of the United States for its refusal to extend these most basic of legal protections to those suspected of being "enemy combatants" will surely be employed at another time to justify the same treatment of [American citizens being indefinitely detained in secret prisons](#).



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