

Mexican diplomat says Obama promises NSA probe (Update)

October 22 2013, by John Heilprin



Mexico's Secretary of Foreign Affairs Jose Antonio Meade speaks to reports during a news conference at the Mexican U.N. Mission in Geneva, Switzerland, Tuesday, Oct. 22, 2013. Meade said that U.S. President Obama has promised an investigation into spying the U.S. reportedly did on Mexico's presidential email system. Meade says that Obama "gave his word that there is going to be an investigation" during conversations with Mexican President Enrique Pena Nieto. (AP Photo/John Heilprin)

President Barack Obama has promised an investigation into spying the U.S. reportedly did on Mexico's presidential email system, Mexico's top

diplomat told reporters Tuesday. The White House said Mexico's concerns would be addressed as part of a broader examination of U.S. intelligence gathering.

Secretary of Foreign Affairs Jose Antonio Meade said during an impromptu news conference in Geneva that Obama made the pledge during recent personal conversations by telephone and in person with Mexican President Enrique Pena Nieto.

"Mexico did not ask for an explanation. Mexico asked for an investigation," Meade said when asked whether the U.S. had apologized or explained the reported National Security Agency spying. Obama "gave his word that there was going to be an investigation around this issue. He said that he had not authorized any spying on Mexico."

The White House said the U.S. was not conducting a specific investigation into claims related to Mexico, but rather was examining Mexico's concerns as part of a previously announced review into how the U.S. gathers intelligence.

The U.S. has cited that review, which Obama discussed last month at the U.N. General Assembly, in responding to concerns from other allies. That review is aimed at ensuring a proper balance between security and privacy concerns, the White House said.

"Given the close partnership between Mexico and the United States, matters related to Mexico are part of that ongoing review," said Caitlin Hayden, a spokeswoman for the White House's National Security Council.

Mexico is going to conduct its own investigation, to find out if any eavesdropping was conducted within the nation's territory and whether any Mexican official cooperated with, or failed to stop the spying,

Interior Secretary Miguel Angel Osorio Chong said at a news conference Tuesday in Mexico City.

Osorio Chong said Mexico's new administration had tightened security on its phone and data communications since taking office in December.

The reports of NSA snooping have kicked up a firestorm abroad. The Brazilian president canceled a state visit to Washington, the German government canceled a Cold War-era surveillance agreement and the French government summoned the U.S. ambassador for answers.

A report by the German news magazine Der Spiegel said documents from NSA leaker Edward Snowden indicate the U.S. gained access to former Mexican President Felipe Calderon's email system when he was in office. Earlier, a document dated June 2012 indicated the NSA had read Pena Nieto's emails before he was elected.

Meade, who arrived in Geneva a day ahead of the U.N. Human Rights Council's review of Mexico's human rights record, called such alleged spying "an abuse of trust" and said his government would insist that those who authorized it "be sanctioned appropriately."

"What we are looking for is that the investigation leads to corrective measures to make sure that this (email spying) doesn't happen," he said.

Asked whether Mexico might curtail any of its intelligence cooperation on counter-narcotics or counterterrorism because of the revelations, Meade answered: "We will be awaiting for the response before deciding whether any additional action is warranted."

Calderon said Monday that the alleged spying on his emails was an affront to Mexican institutions. Mexico's Foreign Relations Department, which called the email spying "unacceptable, illegitimate and contrary to

Mexican law and international law," has said it would send a diplomatic note to the United States.

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