

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Finland must further investigate USA rendition flights**

The Finnish authorities must further investigate newly released data to determine if USA rendition flights landed in the country, Amnesty International said today.

The Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs published information last week revealing some 150 landings in Finland by aircraft connected to the CIA's rendition and secret detention programmes but said they were only seeking clarification from the USA on one flight despite questions over a number of flights.

The ministry also claimed that all but one of the flights in the data set were "civilian" in nature and therefore not connected to unlawful activity by the USA or any other state.

"While it is welcome that Finland has published the data, this is only a first step," said Julia Hall, Amnesty International's expert on counter-terrorism and human rights.

"The material raises more questions than it answers and provides ample reason for further investigation. Finland has a legal obligation to do so since we know that many of those subjected to rendition were tortured and otherwise ill-treated."

The Finnish authorities identified one aircraft operated by Miami Air, tail number N733MA, that had travelled between the Manas US Air Force transit base in Kyrgyzstan and Finland in December 2002. The plane flew from Helsinki to Kyrgyzstan and back to Helsinki on the same day. The US authorities had contacted the Finnish authorities in advance and requested that the flights be cleared for landing. The Finnish defence ministry granted permission for the aircraft to land.

"The Finnish government's distinction between 'civilian' and 'state' aircraft in the rendition context is a patently false one," said Julia Hall.

"It is well-documented and widely acknowledged that the CIA contracted with private carriers – a number of which appear in the recently released data – to conduct renditions. The CIA purposely hid its covert rendition operations behind civilian aviation companies and now the Finnish government is purposely obscuring the possible nature of these so-called 'civilian' aircraft. All the suspect flights must be investigated further, not just one."

The precise source of the data remains unclear. Amnesty International will submit a follow-up request to the government seeking additional information and clarification regarding key details, such as whether the information derived from flight plans or actual landing/departure records; the full names of the companies operating the aircraft; the number of crew and passengers aboard each flight; the full flight path for each aircraft; and whether any customs or border control procedures were conducted.

Despite Finnish government assertions, a number of the flights raise concerns about possible Finnish complicity in the CIA's rendition programme. For example:

- A March 2006 flight, tail number N733MA, that landed in Helsinki on the same date that the Lithuanian authorities acknowledge the aircraft landed in Lithuania. The Lithuanian government has acknowledged that it hosted two secret CIA prisons that had been prepared to

house detainees.;

- A July 2005 flight, tail number N1HC, from Kabul, Afghanistan to Helsinki. A 2006 European Parliament report had identified the aircraft as connected to the rendition programme;
- A September 2004 flight, tail number N88ZL, from Bagram, Afghanistan to Helsinki. A 2010 United Nations study on secret detention stated that the plane had landed in Lithuania on the same day. Amnesty International had requested an investigation into this flight last year.

“Requesting information from the US on its covert operations is a dead end, not an investigation,” said Julia Hall.

“The US has already said that it won’t share such data, not even with close allies. The investigation should and can continue in Finland with an in-depth and transparent review of its own records. Finnish government claims that it has done all it can are simply not credible. We do not have the full story yet.”

Amnesty International will submit a more detailed response to the government this week, requesting additional information and clarification. The organization will continue to press for a full accounting of Finland’s involvement in the USA’s rendition and secret detention programmes.

Public Document

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