

TB patient fires back at health officials

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Tuberculosis patient Andrew Speaker says he is being painted as a scofflaw in order to cover up the shortcomings of U.S. health officials.

The ailing Atlanta attorney told The New York Times health officials have been trying to ruin his credibility so he won't be believed when he insists they never told him he had a particularly dangerous strain of TB and should not travel.

Speaker, who is recovering in a specialized Denver hospital, became a bit of a one-man crisis when he flew to Europe for his wedding, potentially exposing a number of fellow passengers.

While federal and state health officials contended Speaker disregarded their instructions, the Times said the Speaker family has produced taped phone calls in which a Fulton County Health Department physician told him he was "not contagious" and "not a threat to anyone."

Speaker told the newspaper his background as a personal-injury lawyer has provided him with the backbone to not back down in the face of criticism from officials.

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