

## Rudd calls salute to Bush a joke

by UPI

BUCHAREST, Romania -- Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd said he was joking when he threw a salute to U.S. President George Bush during the NATO summit in Romania. Rudd denied he was trying to take over as Bush's "deputy sheriff," a moniker the president gave Rudd's predecessor, causing concern among Australia's Asian neighbors, The Age reported Friday. In 2003, Bush called John Howard, Australia's former prime minister, his deputy sheriff in the Asia-Pacific region because of his support of U.S. foreign policy. Rudd said his salute during the summit at Bucharest was meant to be "a joke," the Melbourne newspaper said. "I was just saying 'hi' to the president of the United States," Rudd said. "I was just with him the other day."

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