

German defence and interior ministers visit the US

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6 May 2013

German interior minister Hans Peter Friedrich and defence minister Thomas de Maizière visited the United States last week, seeking close cooperation with the United States and praising the country as a strategic partner and an important example to follow. The visit heralds a significant intensification of German militarism and domestic repression.

Under the pretext of fighting terrorism in Germany, both ministers have used the terrorist attack in Boston to expand their own attacks on democratic rights and the strengthening of the state apparatus. Following the attack, the Obama administration virtually placed the Boston area under martial law, testing out its counterinsurgency measures (see “American democracy in shambles”).

Interior Minister Friedrich praised this approach effusively. He stressed that Germany and the US were “intimately linked” in fighting terrorism and worked well together “at all levels”.

In Washington, Friedrich met with Attorney General Eric Holder, Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano and Lisa Monaco, deputy national security adviser to Barack Obama. The discussions focused mainly on the development of the German and European security apparatus.

Friedrich urged stricter entry controls for the European Union (EU). As one example, he mentioned the US Electronic System for Travel Authorisation (ESTA). The ESTA requires that those traveling to the United States without a visa provide numerous personal details, including the aim and purpose of their trip prior to departure.

Upon arrival, they have to undergo what amounts to an interrogation, and leave their fingerprints and photo. Friedrich demanded that the “loss of control” due to visa-free travel within Europe’s 26-country Schengen

Area must be “counter-balanced” by the establishment of an electronic travel system.

The minister justified his proposal by pointing to the profile of the alleged Boston bombers. According to the US authorities, these individuals were not affiliated with any extremist groups but acted alone. Friedrich emphasised that the pattern of “self-radicalisation and travel activities” also existed in Europe.

The claim that extremist terrorists are increasingly individuals who act independently of larger organisations serves in both the US and Germany as a pretext to regard every citizen as a potential target for state surveillance.

Friedrich also cited the involvement of about three dozen German citizens in the armed Syrian opposition as grounds for tightening up immigration regulations.

This argument is completely cynical. The German foreign ministry supports the Islamic-fundamentalist-dominated Syrian “resistance” against President Assad in many ways—in the name of “freedom and democracy”. At the same time, the German interior minister uses the same clientele as an excuse to strengthen the German and European security apparatus—in the name of the “war against terrorism”.

As well as securing electronic and biometric data on all travellers in the EU, Friedrich also called for the expansion of video surveillance in public places. “I regard video surveillance as a technical possibility to increase security”, he said. “This is done very well here in America.”

The strengthening of the state apparatus goes hand in hand with an aggressive foreign policy. At a meeting with his counterpart, Chuck Hagel, Defence Minister Thomas de Maizière assured the United States of German support in their neo-colonial campaigns.

In relation to a possible direct military intervention in

Syria, De Maizière said both countries would coordinate closely, but he did not anticipate any “short-term decisions”.

De Maizière was the first defence minister of a NATO state to promise to send troop contingents to Afghanistan for the period after 2015. Up to 800 German soldiers will remain stationed in the country after the official withdrawal, where they will be part of a “training and advisory mission” through which Germany can maintain its strategic access to raw materials in Central Asia.

Shortly before the trip, news weekly *Der Spiegel* reported that the US had given the green light for the supply of “Reaper” armed drones to Germany. De Maizière confirmed a request had been made by the federal government. For tactical reasons, the final decision regarding the purchase will be made after Germany’s general elections in autumn, to keep the theme out of the election campaign. So far, the Bundeswehr (Armed Forces) has used leased unarmed drones.

Here again, the United States provides the model for the German government to follow. Washington regularly deploys armed drones in Pakistan, Yemen and other countries to terrorise the population. President Obama regards it as his right to kill “terrorist suspects” using armed drones without them facing any form of due process.

The acquisition of this weaponry will greatly expand the ability of German imperialism to conduct colonial wars of conquest. At the same time, the increased use of drones at home is also being planned. It is already practised in relation to monitoring demonstrations.

As in the US, the legal basis for the establishment of a police state with mass surveillance has been greatly expanded in Germany in recent years. This applies to the use of the Armed Forces at home, as well as the expansion of the anti-terrorist database that eliminates the historic separation of police and intelligence agencies in post-Nazi Germany.

The joint visit by Germany’s interior and defence ministers to the United States sends a clear signal. While German foreign policy is preparing for new wars abroad, it is adopting the methods of the world’s largest security apparatus to suppress future class struggles at home.



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