

Massive NSA spying on European Union, Germany

Patrick Martin
1 July 2013

The US National Security Agency spied on officials of the European Union, infiltrated its computer network and bugged the EU's headquarters in Brussels as well as diplomatic offices in Washington DC and New York City, according to a report published by the German magazine *Der Spiegel*.

The magazine said it learned of the spying from secret documents obtained by whistleblower Edward Snowden, now threatened with criminal prosecution and a possible death sentence for exposing illegal US government spying.

An NSA document dated September 2010 specifically mentions the EU offices at the United Nations headquarters in New York as a "location target" for eavesdropping.

Even more serious is the apparent electronic eavesdropping of the Brussels office building where the EU Council of Ministers and the European Council are located. A security investigation by the EU five years ago monitored calls that were being made from the building's telephone system.

"Security officials managed to track the calls to NATO headquarters in the Brussels suburb of Evere," *Der Spiegel* reported. "A precise analysis showed that the attacks on the telecommunications system had originated from a building complex separated from the rest of the NATO headquarters that is used by NSA experts."

This revelation may have the most explosive consequences for US-European relations, since NATO, nominally a military alliance between the US, Canada and numerous European countries, has apparently been used as a screen for US surveillance of its supposed allies. *Der Spiegel* said the Snowden documents also revealed that the NSA taps a half billion phone calls, emails and text messages in Germany every month. The

magazine quoted an NSA document saying, "We can attack the signals of most foreign third-class partners, and we do it too."

In NSA parlance, the United States is the sole first-class nation, with Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand rated as second-class partners, and less favored European countries such as France and Germany rated as third-class partners. Only the four second-class partners, all of whom participate in and facilitate the US-led spying on the entire world, are ostensibly exempted from NSA surveillance.

Many of the third-class partners have agreements to share communications data with the US, including Denmark, the Netherlands, France, Germany, Spain and Italy, according to a report Sunday in the British *Observer* newspaper. This does not stop the NSA from carrying out large-scale surveillance of communications in and through these countries, however.

The surveillance of Germany is much more intensive than that of France—as many as 30 million connections monitored daily compared to 2 million—and the spying is on the same level as that carried out by the United States against Iraq, Saudi Arabia and China.

Many high-ranking European officials issued statements of outrage and protest. It is doubtful that these representatives of the European ruling class are as surprised by the revelations as they claim to be, and they no doubt are engaged in similar surveillance of their own populations and of their American counterparts.

But the unanimity of the response is an indication that European governments are concerned about the potential backlash among the people of the continent over the US dragnet of telecommunications and the Internet, as well as the US efforts to persecute those

who have brought the spying to public notice.

Germany's justice minister, Sabine Leutheusser-Schnarrenberger, called Sunday for an immediate explanation from the United States. "If the media reports are accurate," she said, "it is reminiscent of actions among enemies during the Cold War."

Luxembourg Foreign Minister Jean Asselborn said, "If these reports are true, then it is abhorrent. It would seem that the secret services have gotten out of control. The US should monitor their own secret services rather than their allies."

The diplomat noted the contradiction between the professed purpose of NSA spying and the latest revelations, declaring, "The US justifies everything as being part of the fight against terrorism. But the EU and its diplomats are not terrorists."

Elmar Brok, chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the European Parliament, affiliated with the German Christian Democratic Union, the ruling right-wing party, told *Der Spiegel*, "The spying has reached dimensions that I didn't think were possible for a democratic country. Such behavior among allies is intolerable... They have completely lost all balance. George Orwell is nothing by comparison."

Similar statements were issued by spokesmen across the bourgeois political spectrum in Europe, from the conservative right to the Greens. The EU commissioner for justice, fundamental rights and citizenship, Viviane Reding, told an audience in Luxembourg that the spy revelations could wreck talks set to begin next week on a US-EU trade agreement.

"Partners do not spy on each other," she said. "We cannot negotiate over a big trans-Atlantic market if there is the slightest doubt that our partners are carrying out spying activities on the offices of our negotiators."



To contact the WSW and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact