

German intelligence services work closely with NSA

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Newly revealed NSA documents show that the German intelligence services are among the closest partners, spying on both foreign targets and the German people.

The latest edition of the *Der Spiegel* published a report based on NSA documents supplied to the magazine by whistleblower Edward Snowden. In the documents, NSA employees stress their close cooperation with the German Federal Intelligence Service (BND), the German Federal Office for Protection of the Constitution (BFV), and the Federal Office for Information Security (BSI). All three intelligence services are referred to as “key partners”.

The documents refer to Germany as the US’s “most prolific partner” in wiretapping operations in Afghanistan. The NSA files also refer positively to German cooperation in North Africa and Iraq. At the start of the Iraq war in 2003, the BND secret service supported American troops and also played a central role in Western alliance preparations for a war against Syria.

Cooperation between German and US intelligence services has systematically intensified in recent years. According to the report, the German side was determined “to consolidate and expand” cooperation. BND President Gerhard Schindler repeatedly expressed his “urgent desire” to work more closely with the NSA.

In 2007, NSA tip-offs led to the arrest in Germany of the so-called Sauerland Islamist group and greater cooperation between the two countries. Since then there has been “regular US-German analytic exchanges and closer cooperation in tracking both German and non-German extremist targets,” the report states.

This collaboration increasingly involved comprehensive monitoring of the German population. BFV officials were repeatedly trained by NSA

employees “to obtain, filter and further process local data.” From such an exchange of data, “both Germany and the US would benefit,” the document states.

The NSA documents highlights the year 2012, in which Germany demonstrated great “eagerness” to improve its own monitoring capabilities and even “took risks ...to satisfy US needs for information”.

In a passage entitled “Success Stories” dating from January this year, the NSA files report: “The German government modifies its interpretation of the G-10 privacy law ... to afford the BND more flexibility in sharing protected information with foreign partners.” The BND was directly involved in ensuring such a political decision.

The extent to which broad layers of the population were subject to monitoring is confirmed by the close cooperation between the German and US intelligence agencies in the recording and indexing of Internet traffic. According to *Der Spiegel*, the NSA supplied the BFV with the spyware program, Xkeyscore.

This program is able to filter out and evaluate the phone numbers, e-mail addresses and log-ins of individual citizens from the huge amounts of raw metadata tapped. The basis for this operation is the comprehensive monitoring of the entire data stream. There is evidence that the program also maintains a buffer of a few days enabling agents to better monitor and assess the contents of communication. This technology permits the German intelligence agencies to access any mail sent or telephone call made in Germany.

The President of the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (BFV), Hans-Georg Maassen, has now confirmed that his agency tested the program. The NSA reports indicate that members of the BND trained their BFV colleagues. This indicates that they had in-

depth knowledge of the software.

The new revelations are highly incriminating for the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, who has repeatedly denied any knowledge of collusion between German and US intelligence agencies. Just a few days ago, she declared that she had only found out about the Prism program from the press. Merkel is only able to deceive the public so brazenly because she can rely on the support of the opposition parties.

All of the opposition parties are providing political cover for German intelligence agencies. Criticisms of the Chancellor by the Social Democratic Party and the Greens invariably accuse her of insufficiently defending German business interests against US espionage, while seeking to hide the role of the German intelligence services. In a statement to the press on Monday, SPD Secretary-General Andrea Nahles stressed that her party would not seek to make capital out of the affair at the expense of the government, even though a general election is looming in September.

The reason for the opposition's reticence is its own entanglement with the intelligence services. The SPD-Green coalition that governed Germany from 1998 to 2005 not only introduced the anti-social Agenda 2010 and Hartz 4 programs; it also organized mass spying on the entire population in cooperation with the NSA.

Former NSA Director Michael Hayden told the German ZDF television that an important meeting was held between the intelligence services of the two countries after September 11, 2001 which decided, among other things, to set up a common data pool.

"We were very open to our friends," Hayden said. "We were very clear about what we were up to. There were no doubts raised about the objectives of the NSA espionage program."

The German Left Party also has a long tradition of working with the intelligence agencies. It has participated in numerous state governments, thus taking responsibility for the activities of the state BFV agencies. When more and more facts emerged about the links between the German intelligence agencies and far-right terrorist groups, Left Party representatives defended the BFV as a "firewall" that should not be abolished. They even invited Maassen, the BFV chief, to a public meeting to exchange ideas about the future of his agency.

The Left Party's current representative in the

Parliamentary Control Committee (PKG), Steffen Bockshahn, has justified his vow of silence about the proceedings of the PCG regarding "really hot information." Like his predecessor, he defends the existence of the secret services. "All of the police and intelligence services must be able to do their job properly for once", Bockshahn commented recently.



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