

Diplomatic crisis grows over NSA spying in Europe

Alex Lantier, Alejandro López
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Amidst a rising diplomatic crisis over mass electronic espionage in Europe by the US National Security Agency (NSA), European officials attacked US spying operations in Europe, including the wiretapping of German Chancellor Angela Merkel. They rejected NSA chief General Keith Alexander's claims that the NSA relied entirely on European intelligence agencies to carry out its espionage operations.

Elmar Brok, a European parliamentarian and member of Germany's right-wing Christian Democratic Union (CDU), sent by Berlin to Washington for discussions on NSA spying, said, "There is cooperation done by the Americans and Europeans on terrorism and cybercrime. The question is not what is done in cooperation," Brok said. He said that Alexander "said at the same time that he does work unilaterally as NSA ... in Europe," adding that this was something that he "cannot accept."

Brok added that, notwithstanding his remarks to Congress on Tuesday, Alexander "clearly has said that there's espionage in Germany by NSA without notifying the German authorities, including Merkel but also citizens."

European officials are pushing to place limits on NSA spying on European governments and top officials, while covering up spying carried out by US and European intelligence officials against the population of Europe and the world.

There are multiple new revelations of US spying operations against its ostensible "allies" in Europe. The Greek daily *Ta Nea* cited documents released by former NSA contractor Edward Snowden identifying the US Embassy in Athens as a center of electronic spying operations carried out by the US Special Collection Service (SCS), a service run jointly by the CIA and NSA.

British investigative journalist Duncan Campbell,

who identified the US Embassy in Berlin as a NSA spying center for German news magazine *Der Spiegel*, posted an article on his web site branding several US diplomatic facilities as centers of espionage aimed at Europe. Documents released by Snowden show that the NSA runs spying operations targeting at least 35 heads of state, from facilities including in Germany, France, Italy, and Spain.

Campbell's report included pictures suggesting that the US Consulate in Geneva and the US embassies in Stockholm, Warsaw, Brussels, and the Cypriot capital of Nicosia all house electronic monitoring facilities similar to that in the US Embassy in Berlin.

Other European governments also denounced Alexander's claims that NSA spying was carried out by European agencies. French government spokeswoman Najat Vallaud-Belkacem criticized Alexander's "denials" of US responsibility for NSA electronic spying in Europe as "not believable." These operations include the collection of over 70 million phone calls or SMS messages in France and 60 million in Spain by the NSA in a one-month period earlier this year.

She insisted on "the need to get more clarity on the practice of the US secret services," calling for a "code of conduct" on spying and adding, "We cannot let doubts set in between partners."

An anonymous diplomat at the Quai d'Orsay in Paris dismissed Alexander's statements as "extravagant ... Let's not get things mixed up. It is not our job to explain the contents of documents that we do not have."

Speaking in the Spanish Parliament yesterday, Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy said: "The Spanish government takes the reports in the media about this issue of espionage very seriously."

On Monday, Foreign Minister José Manuel García-

Margallo warned that if Madrid found that the US had conducted espionage activities by tapping private phones calls—as documents leaked by former Snowden purportedly show—it would hurt Spanish-US relations. He said that “It could break the climate of trust that has traditionally existed between our two countries.”

The Spanish Attorney General’s office is beginning a preliminary official inquiry into the activities of the NSA and CIA in Spain.

European officials are also trying to cover up their ties to US spying operations which, as Snowden’s exposures have shown, reveal that the surveillance infrastructure of a police state exists in the United States and Europe in all but name. The electronic surveillance capabilities of the United States and its European allies, aimed at hundreds of millions of people internationally, far surpass those of the police states of 20th century Europe.

Several mass electronic spying operations in Europe, including those run by Britain’s Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) and France’s General Directorate of External Security (DGSE), have already come to light.

In Spain, Foreign Minister Margallo refused to give any details on the operations of Spain’s main intelligence agency, the National Intelligence Center (CNI), and its possible collaboration with the NSA. “I have no record of the actions of our intelligence service, the CNI, inside or outside our borders, which are by definition classified,” he said.

Documents released by Snowden show that France’s DGSE has an agreement with the NSA to coordinate their electronic spying activities, codenamed “Lustre,” according to French intelligence sources who spoke to *Le Monde*. These agreements were signed in late 2011.

In exchange for giving Washington copies of all Internet traffic through France—a major transit point for Internet activity from sensitive regions such as Afghanistan and Africa—the DGSE receives NSA records of Internet traffic through nodes controlled by the US.

“It’s a trade that has developed between the leadership of the NSA and of the DGSE. We give entire batches of information on these zones and they give us, in exchange, parts of the world where we are not present, but the negotiation was not a one-time thing, the scale of sharing has grown with discussions that

continue today,” DGSE officials said.

However, they added that while “exchange of data” occurs between French and US intelligence, they “categorically” denied that Paris had transferred 70 million communication intercepts to Washington.



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