

German interior minister warns of threat of lethal attacks by Islamists

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On Wednesday, German interior minister Thomas de Maizière (Christian Democratic Union, CDU) warned of an imminent threat of terrorist attacks by Islamist “religious warriors” in Germany and throughout Europe.

“An abstract danger has become a concrete, lethal threat in Europe, with an impact on Germany,” the interior minister said at the presentation of the domestic intelligence agency’s 2013 report in Berlin. The attack at the Jewish museum in Brussels, where four people were killed by a jihadi at the end of May, had “made clear that the possibility of an attack by such forces returning from Syria has become a deadly reality,” de Maizière explained.

Domestic intelligence chief Hans-Georg Maaßen added, “Islamist terrorism represents the greatest threat to society. Germany is not far from terrorism. We continue to be a target for the planning of attacks.”

Several newspapers underscored the stark warning. *Die Welt* wrote, “Minister de Maizière is not inclined to exaggerate when he speaks of a deadly threat to this country, he means a qualitatively new kind of terrorism.”

In fact, the statements of the interior minister and the domestic intelligence chief should be treated with skepticism. They come at a point in time where the intelligence service is under extreme pressure due to its complicity in the activities of the extreme right-wing terrorist group National Socialist Underground (NSU). Despite the revelations of Edward Snowden, Germany’s domestic and foreign intelligence services are seeking closer collaboration with the American NSA. And the German government is currently leading a massive propaganda campaign for more military operations.

It is therefore legitimate to suspect that the dramatic

warnings about the threat from Islamist terrorism are above all aimed at combating the widespread opposition to the build-up of state powers and militarism.

Baden-Württemberg’s interior minister Reinhold Gall (Social Democrats, SPD) admitted that there was no concrete evidence for an increased terrorist threat. In an interview with *Deutschlandfunk* he said that we “have no evidence concerning attacks in Baden-Württemberg and to my knowledge also in Germany.”

Along with the attack in Brussels, de Maizière merely added as a justification of his warning that 320 jihadis from Germany were operating in Syria, of which around 100 had returned. According to security agency statements, 2,000 Islamists have travelled to Syria from across Europe. These numbers are not new. They have been in the public domain for some time and cannot justify an increased terrorism threat.

The “potential number of Islamists” in Germany was 43,190 in 2013, according to the domestic intelligence agency, although it remains completely unclear how this group of suspects was selected. In the previous year, the security agency cited a figure of 42,550. Salafist groups, from which most of the jihadis are recruited according to domestic intelligence, are estimated to have 6,000 members in Germany, compared to 4,500 in 2012.

It should be taken for granted that the jihadi scene and their milieu are heavily infiltrated by the intelligence agencies, much like the right-wing NSU terrorist group, which was able to conduct 10 murders and several bank robberies unhindered, even though two dozen agents from the intelligence services and police were active in its support networks.

The Syrian civil war in which the jihadis are involved has been actively encouraged and supported by the

German government for some time. The deadly threat which de Maizière and Maaßen are now dramatizing is, to a large extent, home made.

Berlin has been a centre for the Syrian opposition for some time, which was able to plan the overthrow of the Assad regime behind the backs of the public and with the support of the German government.

The German navy, which is meant to be reducing arms smuggling off the Lebanese coast within the framework of the UN's UNIFIL mission, allowed the passage of weapons to the Syrian opposition and did not withhold a single shipment.

Germany's foreign intelligence service (BND) is regarded as the best connected intelligence service in Syria. In summer 2012, the navy sent the intelligence ship Oker, equipped with BND technology, to carry out surveillance of the country for an operation lasting several months. In addition, BND agents are active at the US's Turkish base in Adana. In this way the German intelligence service has either directly supported the opposition to Assad, or backed it through its US allies.

The Islamist groups, Al Nusra Front and ISIS, which now allegedly pose a terrorist threat, have thus either directly or indirectly benefited from German assistance. They were built up, armed and financed by the NATO allies Saudi Arabia and Qatar, as well as NATO member Turkey.

As was to be expected, several newspapers and politicians instinctively responded to the terror threat with demands for a build-up of state powers.

The *Neue Osnabrücker Zeitung* commented, "The intelligence agency's report proves that the domestic intelligence service is necessary, in spite of the terrible errors which took place in the course of the NSU affair. A democracy can only be defended by authorities which can recognize threats to domestic security and warn against them."

In the previously cited *Deutschlandfunk* interview, Baden-Württemberg's interior minister Gall called for an expansion of data collection, which had previously been blocked by decisions by Germany's constitutional court and the European court of justice. "That would be one of the options to make work easier for the intelligence agencies," he said.

But Gall above all urged closer collaboration with US intelligence agencies, which is already much more

extensive than the public is aware, as *Spiegel* revealed in its latest lead article.

"In principle I am convinced that the intelligence agencies have to cooperate more closely," Gall stated. "And I am certain that in the future we will be dependent on foreign intelligence agencies. The occurrences with the NSA should not call in to question this principled opinion."

These statements should be taken as a warning. The expansion of the intelligence agencies and their blanket surveillance of the population are directed against all social and political opposition. They are preparing for the suppression of resistance to militarism and social cuts. The terrorist threat, which has been strengthened considerably by the policies of the German government, serves as a pretext to implement the expansion of the surveillance apparatus.



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