

After Brussels attack, EU officials plan vast escalation of police spying

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With investigations just beginning into Tuesday's bombings in Brussels, European Union (EU) officials are pushing for an extraordinary expansion of police and intelligence agency spying powers. EU justice and interior ministers are meeting today to map out an intensification of intelligence-gathering and to coordinate police operations across the continent.

The first day of the investigation has already raised the most serious questions as to the role of the Belgian state in the attack. It is already clear that as in last year's ISIS attacks in Paris, the perpetrators were well known to police and intelligence agencies.

In the face of mounting evidence to the contrary, European governments of all stripes are claiming that the attacks were able to proceed because a failure of intelligence sharing prevented authorities from identifying the attackers. On this fraudulent basis, they are demanding stepped-up police spying on the population.

"The best remedy against such attacks is information exchange," declared German Interior Minister Thomas de Maizière. "The main point, however, is that we have separately existing data pools—for visa traffic, for investigative data and for flight passenger data. We have to link these."

De Maizière bluntly declared that privacy and data protection rights were irrelevant, saying, "These attacks and the current security situation, the terror situation, have to lead us to put these data protection reasons at the bottom of the list."

Paris is pushing for the adoption of a controversial pan-European Passenger Name Record (PNR) system to centralize flight data in Europe and hand it over to intelligence agencies internationally. "The PNR is a symbol. The European Parliament must fully show its commitment in the fight against terrorism," said French

Prime Minister Manuel Valls.

On Tuesday, Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi called for a "unitary European security structure" of police and intelligence agencies, stating, "Secret services work more and better together."

Renzi held up as a model police operations during the 1968-1980 "years of lead," which saw bloody violence involving far-right groups and petty-bourgeois "left" groups such as the Red Brigades. "Italy, alas, has experience to offer. Italian police dealt with the mafia, terrorism and the Red Brigades," he said, adding, "Europe will defeat jihadist terrorism the way Italy defeated terrorism."

EU Home Affairs Commissioner Dimitris Avramopoulos insisted there should be no concerns about secret, anti-democratic conduct by the state agencies now being granted massive powers. "The logic of the deep state has finished in our days, everything is globalized, everything is internationalized," Avramopoulos declared.

Avramopoulos' reference to the end of the "deep state" is highly significant. It is apparently aimed at reassuring the public that, despite the handover of extraordinary powers to intelligence and police agencies, there will be no return to the wave of bombings and military coups by far-right parties and army factions that swept Europe from the 1960s to the early 1980s.

In a period of economic crisis and social protest, marked by events such as the 1968 general strike in France and the 1975 toppling of the Franco dictatorship in Spain, the ruling class sought to retain power by resorting to military coups and terror bombings falsely blamed on left-wing groups. These included the CIA-backed coup in Greece in 1967 that ushered in the dictatorship of the colonels; the coups of 1960, 1971

and 1980 in Turkey; and the far-right bombings in Italy such as the 1969 Piazza Fontana killings in Milan and the 1980 Bologna massacre.

Avramopoulos' reassurances are worthless. Amid the deepest economic crisis since the Great Depression of the 1930s and the discrediting of pro-austerity governments across Europe, the build-up of police powers poses the most dire threat to democratic rights.



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