

WikiLeaks data reveals close cooperation between German intelligence and NSA

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The German foreign secret service (BND) has not only delivered data to the US intelligence services on a massive scale, it has also worked directly with the NSA in developing detection software. This has been confirmed by extensive data published by the WikiLeaks platform at the beginning of December. It documents the close cooperation between German and American intelligence agencies and reveals new details.

The data contains about 90 gigabytes of information. It consists of a total of 2,420 files, which were forwarded in 2015 to the German parliamentary committee that is currently investigating the activities of the intelligence services. According to WikiLeaks, the data originates from several German federal authorities, including the Bundesnachrichtendienst (BND), the Federal Office for Constitutional Protection (BfV) and the Federal Office for Information Security (BSI).

How WikiLeaks acquired the data is unknown. The *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung* immediately held Russia responsible. The paper alleges that it had been informed by “security circles” that the data could have stemmed from a hacker attack on the Bundestag in the spring of 2015 for which Russia was responsible. There was a “high plausibility” for this thesis because none of the documents had been digitized after January 2015. Furthermore, the documents were of the lowest degree of secrecy for circulation within the Bundestag.

But there is no independent confirmation of these accusations against Russia.

The close collaboration between the BND and the NSA is no secret. It was already clear in June 2013 from the material released by Edward Snowden. Snowden revealed that both intelligence services use the XKeyScore software to filter and search worldwide mobile and internet traffic.

The latest publications show that the BND not only used the software, but was also involved in its development. An internal document from June 2013, which reports on cooperation with the US intelligence agencies, shows that a BND employee had been seconded “to programme and manage XKeyScore for a period of two years.”

The BND was also aware of the spying activities of numerous US companies located in Germany. An email from the German chancellery in January 2014 names Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman, and Booz Allen Hamilton. Edward Snowden had last worked for the latter. Both Lockheed Martin and Northrop Grumman also cooperated with British intelligence services, “according to intelligence reports.”

The documents now published throw light onto the activities of the German parliamentary Investigation Committee as well as the reaction of the BND and the Registrar’s Office to the material released by Snowden and the inquiries undertaken by the Bundestag committee. A closer examination of the files gives some sense of how the “deep state” operates.

The immediate reaction of the BND to the revelations of Snowden was marked by panic. Countless frantic emails in rapid succession, all with short response times, are evidence of how concerned the secret services were to minimise public knowledge of the true extent of worldwide espionage.

Many of these emails dealt with the information that was to be provided to Germany’s relevant parliamentary committees. There is discussion about “speakers’ notes” to be given to representatives of the secret services in order to be prepared for all conceivable questions. Answers to queries from Bundestag representatives, following the first press reports, were checked and edited by the BND and the

chancellery before publication. The answers were brief, noncommittal and generally worthless.

It is not only the intelligence services themselves that are concerned to preserve secrecy about their illegal practices and worldwide spying activities. It is remarkable how hostile the opposition parties in the Bundestag have been towards the WikiLeaks revelations.

Martina Renner, the Left Party deputy in the NSA Investigation Committee, complained that the committee would now have less insight into the secret documents necessary for its work. The intelligence services had always argued that the committee was a risk because information could reach the public. “The current leak gives further impetus to such attacks.”

With her comment Renner practically admitted that the “parliamentary control” of the secret services was based on parliamentarians themselves becoming part of the secret service conspiracy.

The representative of the Greens in the committee, Konstantin von Notz, argued similarly. On Twitter he wrote: “Anyone who releases such things deliberately torpedoed the information gathering and the necessary control of the services.”

In fact, the pretence of parliamentary oversight is torpedoed by the fact that the secret services work completely independently of any control, and all the Bundestag parties are interested in maintaining this situation. Against a background of intensifying political and social tensions, the ruling elite is more than ever dependent on an authoritarian security apparatus.



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