

Berlin Christmas market attack: German intelligence aware of perpetrator's 14 identities

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7 January 2017

Two-and-a-half weeks after the horrific Christmas market attack in Berlin, which left 12 people dead and 56 injured, it is increasingly clear that the suspected perpetrator, Anis Amri, prepared and carried out his operation December 19 under the noses of the intelligence agencies. There is much to suggest that he was even actively facilitated by them.

Amri was known to German authorities under 14 different identities. This information was contained in a report presented by the state criminal director for North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) to the interior affairs committee of the state parliament in Düsseldorf. In an emergency sitting of the committee on Wednesday, North Rhine-Westphalia's Interior Minister, Ralph Jäger, confirmed that the attack was carried out by one man, "about whom a lot was known by the intelligence agencies nationwide."

In fact, if the various facts made public so far are taken together, the "intelligence agencies" apparently knew virtually everything there was to know about Amri. Here are some of the most important facts, as they have been presented in various media outlets.

According to research by *Der Spiegel*, Amri registered "in summer 2015 for asylum under different names in Oberhausen, Dortmund, Karlsruhe and Freiburg." Police in North Rhine-Westphalia had already been informed "that Amri allegedly had contact with the terrorist militia 'Islamic State' (IS) and had been integrated into the network of the hate preacher Abu Walaa as a 'messenger.'"

As early as February 2016, the NRW state criminal office categorised Amri as "a danger ... who could be expected to carry out an attack at any time." He was described as "the perpetrator type" and his file asserted

"that he plans to carry out an Islamist attack."

In early 2016, a court order authorised the tapping of Amri's phone. This was done by the state criminal office in NRW. In the process, investigators found out "that Amri had searched online for instructions how to build pipe bombs" and "that he had called upon other people to carry out attacks with him in Germany."

Then in April 2016, the state prosecutor in Duisburg opened an investigation into Amri. In November 2016, just weeks before the attack, the investigation was halted, supposedly because the location of Amri's residence was not known to authorities.

This official version lacks credibility. Interior Minister Jäger even acknowledged this week that the case had been dealt with seven times by the joint terrorism prevention centre (GTAZ) in Berlin.

According to a previous report by Hans Leyendecker and Georg Mascolo in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, on December 14—just five days prior to the attack—the GTAZ produced "the latest version of a personal profile" with "all of the intelligence material about Amri." One individual described it by saying, "His career exhibited many similarities with those of previous attackers in the service of the Islamic State."

In addition, it is known that Amri was in close contact with the intelligence agencies in Berlin and these were informed about his plans for an attack.

The ARD *Brennpunkt* television programme has cited an intelligence file, according to which "an informant" from the state criminal office in NRW made contact with Amri as early as late 2015. "Over the course of subsequent days, Amri explained that he wanted to carry out attacks in Germany by using weapons of war (AK47s, explosives)."

Between February and March, a domestic intelligence agency informant, who had been informed by Amri about his attack plans, drove him from Dortmund to Berlin. “He was driven by the informant and indicated that it was his duty to kill on behalf of Allah,” the file cited by *Brennpunkt* stated.

Despite these damning facts, Jäger defended the actions of the authorities. They had “done absolutely everything possible under the law.”

This is obviously not the case. Peter Wiesenbacher, deputy parliamentary group chair for the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) in NRW, stated on the *Tagesschau* news program, “Why was there no deportation order for Mr. Amri, who was among the most dangerous threats? He could have been confined him to his residential area; he could have been issued with contacting bans; he could even in my opinion have been taken into deportation custody.” But all of this had “not even been attempted.”

What were the reasons for this? Why are the glaring contradictions of the investigations dismissed as errors or disputes over jurisdiction, followed by demands for “better coordination” of the police and intelligence agencies? It is known that the security apparatus can work extraordinarily efficiently when spying on the population and monitoring large events.

Two things are already clear: the police and intelligence agencies had close contact with the alleged attackers, and the attack has been used to carry out a restructuring of the security authorities bound up with wide-ranging attacks on democratic rights.

This raises the question: are there elements in the security apparatus who were informed in greater detail about the planned attack and allowed it to happen, or possibly even facilitated it, so as to justify the huge build-up of the state now being implemented by the government and supported by the opposition parties?

German Chancellor Angela Merkel (CDU) gave her backing to the reactionary plans of her Interior Minister, Thomas de Maiziere. “In the view of the Federal Chancellor it is important that the Interior Minister make his views clear, and particularly in a situation which everyone judges to be difficult [...] The Chancellor therefore explicitly supports the Interior Minister de Maiziere in principle,” stated deputy government spokesman Georg Streiter.

On 3 January, de Maiziere presented a paper in the

Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung calling, among other things, for an expansion of deportation detention for “threats,” mass deportations of refugees, the construction of a European surveillance apparatus, “intelligent video surveillance,” temporary data storage and more weapons for the police. But above all, de Maiziere—the son of former Wehrmacht General and close Hitler ally, Ulrich de Maiziere—wants to do away with the restrictions contained in the Basic Law following the horrific experience of Nazism: these include the ban on centralising the intelligence agencies and police, and the deployment of the German army domestically.

The opposition parties in Germany are supporting the government’s drive for the construction of a police state. In an interview on Deutschlandfunk on Thursday, Cem Özdemir of the Greens reassured the ruling elite: “I have already said once that we will not exclude ourselves from the debate over the Interior Minister’s proposals.”

The leader of the Left Party parliamentary group, Sahra Wagenknecht, attacked the federal government in the style of the AFD (Alternative for Germany), i.e., from the right. She stated in an interview with the *Stern* magazine that the Merkel government bore “joint responsibility” for the attack in Berlin. “Along with the uncontrolled opening of the borders” the “police [had] been cut to breaking point and is neither in terms of personnel or technology equipped appropriately to deal with the situation.”



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