

Germany Intelligence May Have Spied on Allies



Berlin, October 15 (RHC)-- New revelations suggest Germany's intelligence services cannot only blame the U.S. National Security Agency, the NSA, for spying on friendly countries and other targets. According to reports in the German media, Berlin's spies eavesdropped on the communications of several of the country's allies, including France and the United States until late 2013.

Media sources, including news magazine Spiegel Online, reported that the country's intelligence agency, known as the BND, spied on several friendly countries of its own accord.

The BND has been heavily criticized in recent months for cooperating with the United States' National Security Agency to spy on allies and on German companies.

Now these revelations suggest that there have been several occasions when the German spy agency has acted alone, and possibly illegally. Chancellor Angela Merkel said herself in July 2013, after learning that the NSA had spied on her, that friends do not eavesdrop on each other, but the BND appears to have done just that.

The news came to light Wednesday evening, when German government officials told a parliamentary committee set up to oversee intelligence gathering that the BND had itself unilaterally spied on friendly countries such as France and the United States, to gather information on conflict zones such as

Afghanistan.

Clemens Binniger, deputy chair of the parliamentary committee and a member of the ruling Christian Democrat party, told German broadcaster ARD Wednesday evening the question was whether the intelligence agency had acted beyond its remit in spying on friendly countries.

The NSA and BND had been cooperating over the use of “selectors,” or pieces of identifying information such as phone numbers and email addresses. The NSA had a cooperation agreement with the BND that it could ask for these selectors to be monitored if it believed these were linked to certain issues such as terrorism.

But German media reported this spring that the NSA had the BND monitor a wide range of selectors to gather data for all sorts of reasons, which moved beyond anti-terrorism and towards a form of corporate espionage.

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