Analyses OSW

CENTRE FOR EASTERN STUDIES 8.08.2012 www.osw.waw.pl

The top brass of the German Federal Police dismissed

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On 30th July Hans-Peter Friedrich (CSU), the German Minister of Interior Affairs, dismissed all the heads of the Federal Police (*Bundespolizei*), which was established in 2005 from the renaming the Border Guard (*Bundesgrenzschutz*) and is responsible for the protection of the borders, railways and airports as well as for combating international crime and terrorism. Matthias Seeger and two of his deputies lost their jobs. The Ministry of Interior Affairs did not make the official reasons for the dismissals public. Protests were held against the dismissals by representatives of police trade unions and politicians from the Green Party and the SPD. In their opinion, Friedrich is not managing the Federal Police well, he is not able to improve the level of its equipment or the competences of the staff. According to the opposition, the manner in which Seeger was dismissed proves that the head of the Ministry of Interior is not in full control of the institutions subordinated to the ministry. Seeger's successor was appointed on 1st August. It was Dieter Roman, the former chairman of the department for terrorism and fundamentalism of foreigners at the Ministry of Interior Affairs.

Commentary

- The direct cause of Matthias Seeger's dismissal was his long-term conflict with Hans-Peter Friedrich due to differing views on reforms in the Federal Police. Seeger, who was the head of the Federal Police for four years, at the beginning of 2011 categorically opposed the planned merger of his institution with the Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA) and later regularly expressed his dissatisfaction in public with spending cuts. In appointing a trusted official as the new head of the Federal Police, the Interior Minister intends to facilitate the introduction of possible reforms and to free the Federal Police from constant media attention.

- The change in the position of the head of the Federal Police is part of a trend of appointing trusted officials from the Ministry of Interior Affairs as chairpersons of services and proves that there is a willingness to increase control and co-ordination between the ministry and its institutions. In mid-July the German government accepted the candidacy of Hans-Georg Maassen as the head of the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (BVS). In December 2011 Gerhard Schindler became the head of intelligence. All three (together with Dieter Roman) come from the Department of Public Security of the Ministry of Interior Affairs. By the end of the year also the head of

the BKA will be replaced as Joerg Ziercke is retiring. This is also Friedrich's response to a series of mistakes made in the services subordinated to the ministry, of which the largest was the irregularities revealed in the work of counter-intelligence (BVS) during its investigation into the neo-Nazi National Socialist Underground (NSU) terrorist group. The services were accused of their inability to conduct the investigation, a lack of adequate co-ordination and the destruction of documents related to the investigation.