

German counter-intelligence warns against industrial espionage

The annual report of the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (BfV) for 2009 was released 21 June this year on the topic of security threats for Germany. The head of the Ministry of the Interior Thomas de Maiziere, while presenting the report, pointed to espionage against German state institutions and private firms conducted by foreign intelligence agencies as the greatest challenge for German counter-intelligence. The publication of the problem of industrial espionage in the report is part of a strategy of German intelligence agencies to make businessmen aware of the scale of the threat and to encourage them towards a cooperation with BfV in fighting this problem.

The report for 2009 points to the increasing threat to German firms and government institutions from industrial espionage. According to the BfV there is a great likelihood that the espionage is being carried out by foreign intelligence agencies or with their participation – above all those of Russia and China, whose intelligence agencies are most active and most well represented in Germany. In second and third place as regards the threat to Germany, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has named Islamic terrorism and neo-Nazi and leftist extremism. The BfV pointed to the increase of anti-German Islamic propaganda distributed on-line in connection with last year's elections to the Bundestag. Moreover, the BfV noted a fall in membership rates to neo-Nazi parties and of crimes connected to the ideology. There was, however, an increase in the number of people prepared to use violence for extreme leftist views and also an increase of crimes (arson, beatings) carried out for these purposes.

Industrial espionage appears to be causing ever increasing losses for innovative small and medium businesses in Germany, which is intensifying the activity of the German counter-intelligence. <jus>