

The limited fallout from the American-Russian 'spy affair'

The arrests by the FBI on 26-28 June of 10 persons suspected of working for the Russian Federation's intelligence services, and the confirmation of that fact immediately after the end of President Dmitri Medvedev's visit to the USA, has not as yet brought any negative consequences to political relations between Washington and Moscow. Both sides in their official reactions confirmed their ongoing desire to continue bilateral cooperation, and played down the significance of the FBI's operation, despite the media's growing interest in the case. This indicates that both sides are interested in maintaining an image of improving bilateral relations as well as the effectiveness of the 'reset' policy.

It must be understood that the US revealing these arrests is a warning signal to Moscow, and a sign of the American special services' disquiet at the considerable activity Russian intelligence is undertaking. Immediately after arresting the persons suspected of spying, the US Department of State declared that the affair would not influence US/Russian relations, and that Washington would reinforce everything which had so far been achieved in relations with Moscow, and would not cease joint co-operation in those areas relevant for both parties, such as Iran and North Korea. A similar position, aimed at minimising the negative results of the exposed affair, was taken by representatives of the Russian government. A spokesman for the Russian foreign ministry, while admitting that those arrested were Russian citizens, emphasised that they had not been carrying out any activities aimed against US interests, and that Russia was counting on the participation of its government's representatives during the ongoing legal proceedings. It cannot be ruled out that this case, which is a spectacular failure for Russian intelligence services, may lead to personnel changes in their leadership. <pez>