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The German intelligence was eavesdropping on America and Turkey

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On 16 August, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* published information that the Federal Intelligence Service (BND) had wiretapped phone calls of the US secretaries of state: Hillary Clinton in 2012 and John Kerry in 2013. The BND claims that the two phone calls were recorded accidentally, when the politicians passed through a flight zone where calls were intercepted by the BND (for example, in the Middle East) and were subsequently destroyed. Furthermore, according to media reports, the BND has also obtained classified information from Turkey. On 18 August, Ankara called on the German ambassador in Turkey to provide explanations in connection with this issue. The two sides have also announced a meeting of their respective heads of intelligence.

In connection with the leak concerning the BND's eavesdropping on representatives of the US Administration, it has also been revealed that the CIA has current German government guidelines for its intelligence service which contains a list of countries and topics of interest to the BND since 2009.

Commentary

- The German media gained access to the information as part of the documentation which was being forwarded to the US intelligence from 2012 by a BND employee who was arrested in July this year on charges of spying for the USA. When he was arrested, the German government requested the resident of the intelligence service at the US embassy to leave the country and vowed to make counter-intelligence moves, including with regard to countries which Germany is allied to. These latest developments need to be seen against the background of the wiretapping of Chancellor Merkel's telephone by US intelligence (NSA) revealed in 2013 and Germany's consequent desire to change the foundations of co-operation between the intelligence services of Germany and the USA.
- The disclosure of the BND's actions with regard to the USA will make it more difficult for Berlin to conduct talks with Washington on the future co-operation of the two countries' intelligence services (consultations to this effect have been in place since late 2013; the USA is opposed to renegotiating the agreements signed in the 1960s and to recognising Germany in the category of its closest ally in the area of intelligence co-operation, a status thus far granted to the United Kingdom and Australia). As a consequence of this latest revelation, the German government will probably refrain from firmly insisting on

Washington clearing up the NSA scandal due to the fear that the practices of the two services could be compared. At the same time, this will be used by the opposition parties in the Bundestag as an argument against equipping the German services with additional IT capacities (the BND has requested around 300 million euros to spend on this by 2020 as part of the Strategic Technology Initiative (SIT) project; parliament is to pass its final decision regarding this in autumn this year).

- The fact that intelligence information has been obtained from Turkey indicates that Germany has applied double standards towards its partners within NATO, something Germany criticised the United States for in 2013 during the NSA scandal. Furthermore, this further aggravates the already tense German-Turkish relations (for example, Germany's resistance to Turkey's accession to the EU and its strong criticism of Prime Minister Recep Erdogan for the way the Turkish law enforcement agencies treated the demonstrators on Taksim Square in 2013) when Germany was intensifying its engagement in the Middle East. However, representatives of both the government coalition (including Wolfgang Bosbach from the CDU) and the political opposition (such as Cem Ozdemir from the Green Party) have justified the BND's moves with regard to Turkey due to "Ankara's strategic significance for German security" – the large Turkish diaspora in Germany and the fact that internal Turkish conflicts are being transferred to Germany. Further justification was provided by fear that Islamic terrorists, who may plot attacks on Germany, can cross the Turkish-Syrian border.