

CIA Uses German Bases to Transport Terrorists, Paper Says

By [Global Research](#)

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While the issue over secret CIA prisons in Europe continues to simmer, new allegations over undisclosed CIA flights transporting suspected terrorists is pushing European officials to demand answers from Washington.

The CIA continues to use an American military base in Germany to transport terrorism suspects without informing the German government, business daily Handelsblatt reported Thursday.

Quoting a high-ranking CIA official in Washington, the newspaper reported that such flights carrying prisoners were still stopping off at the US base at Ramstein.

“The CIA planes have made stop-overs in several European countries, including Germany,” the CIA official told Handelsblatt. “Nothing has changed that.”

Meanwhile, The Berliner Zeitung reported Friday there was documentation of 85 takeoffs and landings by planes with a “high probability” of being operated by the CIA, at Ramstein, the Rhine-Main Airbase and others. The newspaper cited experts and “plane-spotters” who observed the planes as responsible for the tally.

Handelsblatt had written that the CIA transports its prisoners through multiple European airports either to Guantanamo Bay or to the alleged secret prisons, so-called “black sites” in eastern Europe.

German politicians, who have remained quiet for the most part over the issue of black sites in Europe, are beginning to call for answers from Washington.

A Green party member of the German parliament’s committee overseeing the intelligence services, Hans-Christian Ströbele, called for an explanation from the German government. He said it had to be established whether people crossing German soil had been taken into circumstances not in line with human rights.

Ströbele added that foreign secret services should not be allowed to operate in Germany.

EU wants a response

The Council of Europe, an independent body, appointed Swiss official Dick Marty to investigate the existence of secret CIA detention centers. Marty said satellite images might be used to help determine if the prisons exist.

EU officials, initially reluctant to comment on the matter, have begun to publicly call for a response from Washington. Justice Commissioner Franco Frattini said Thursday the bloc would seek answers from Washington after EU states sent a joint letter to Washington on the issue.

The Washington Post reported earlier this month that the CIA used facilities in eastern Europe and in Asia to hold suspected terrorists. US-based NGO Human Rights Watch said afterwards that it believes such prisons exist in Romania and Poland. Both countries have denied the allegations.

However, the role of CIA flights in the extra-judicial capture of suspected terrorists involves numerous European countries, including Iceland, Norway, Spain and Sweden. Most of the flights were alleged to have occurred in 2002 and 2003, but the newspaper reported that such a plane landed at Amsterdam's airport only last week, and that the intelligence agency uses a number of firms to disguise the flights.

Painful for Washington

The issue could have serious consequences for both Washington and European countries. If such prisons are found in EU territory, they would likely violate European conventions on human rights. If they exist in countries such as Romania, they could threaten its application to the EU.

The matter could also call into question European participation in the war on terror. For example, Dutch Foreign Minister Bernard Bot recently told his country's parliament that the existence of such prisons in Europe would have "consequences" for Dutch military operations in Afghanistan.

The CIA source told Handelsblatt that the discovery of CIA practices was "very painful" for employees. Another US government official said that the US plans to answer European concerns soon. And a top US official on Wednesday acknowledged mounting EU pressure for Washington to come clean about reports of secret CIA prisons in eastern Europe while stressing his country's right to protect itself against terrorists.

Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Dan Fried said he had discussed the matter with various European officials during talks in Berlin, Vienna, Madrid and Brussels last week, but he refused to elaborate.

"I don't want to attempt to characterize our discussions with allies on this," he told AFP. "The issue came up in a number of ways, in a number of places."

He underlined, however, the US right to wage a battle against terrorism.

"We have a duty to protect our people and to do our best to protect others from terrorists," he said. "We are conducting this struggle in a manner consistent with our values and our international obligations and will continue to do that."

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