

Germany Detains “Double Agent” for “Spying on Spy Investigation”

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German intelligence officer reportedly confessed to reporting back to US government about inquiry into NSA surveillance of German targets

A member of Germany’s foreign intelligence agency has been detained for possibly spying for the US. The 31-year-old is suspected of giving a US spy agency information about a parliamentary inquiry of NSA activities. (Image: PictureAlliance/DPA) German [news outlets](#) on Friday are reporting that a so-called “double agent” has been detained after confessing to investigators that he was paid by U.S. agents to spy on the German parliamentary panel now investigating the extent of U.S. National Security Agency’s surveillance inside the country.

[According](#) to *Deutsche Welle*:

During questioning, the suspect reportedly told investigators that he had gathered information on an investigative committee from Germany’s lower house of parliament, the Bundestag. The panel is conducting an inquiry into NSA surveillance on German officials and citizens.

A spokesperson for the Federal Prosecutor’s office declined to provide further details about the case, according to news agency AFP.

German-US relations have been on the rocks since revelations of mass surveillance not only on German citizens, but also on Chancellor Angela Merkel and other politicians made headlines last year.

Der Spiegel ([Google Translate](#)) notes that initial information indicates the individual—who worked for the Bundesnachrichtendienst (BND), Germany’s equivalent of the NSA—had “been specifically looking for information related to the NSA investigation committee of the Bundestag and given them to his American contact man.”

As journalist Glenn Greenwald immediately observed:

That’d be the ultimate irony: US Govt spied on German parliamentary investigation into US Govt spying on Germans <http://t.co/P9WkGT83oQ>

— Glenn Greenwald (@ggreenwald) [July 4, 2014](#)

And David Meyer, writing for *Gigaom*, [adds](#):

The 31-year-old was originally arrested on suspicion of having contact with Russian intelligence, but then apparently confessed to having reported back at least once to the Americans on the Bundestag committee's activities. He reportedly did this for money. The reports raise the possibility that he may be lying, but also note that the committee has long suspected it was being spied on. If this is all true, it may turn out to be an even bigger diplomatic scandal than the NSA's [bugging of Chancellor Angela Merkel's phone](#), a formal probe into which was [announced](#) a month ago.

On Thursday, the Bundestag's investigative committee looking into NSA surveillance heard testimony from two U.S. whistleblowers who worked, Thomas Drake and William Binney, for the spy agency but objected to what they consider its troubling tactics. As *Deutsche Welle* reports, Binney—who once headed the agencies technology division—accused the NSA of having a “totalitarian mentality” and wanting “total information control” over U.S. citizens and the entirety of the global digital environment. He went on to compare the NSA's approach to that used by dictators against oppressed populations. According to the *Deutsche Presse-Agentur* (DPA):

Drake said the BND had become a “vermiform appendix of the NSA,” referring to accusations it had been passing data on German citizens on to the American service - an act forbidden under Germany's constitution.

“The silence of the BND is terrible,” Drake told the committee, and said people had a right to know what was going on. “You shouldn't wait for a German Edward Snowden to lift the veil.”

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