

Swiss Neutrality ‘Shattered’ as Leading Cryptologic Firm Revealed to be CIA Front

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Switzerland is reeling from the shock caused by revelations last week that Crypto AG, the world’s leading manufacturer of cryptologic equipment during the Cold War, whose clients included over 120 governments around the world, was a front company owned by the United States Central Intelligence Agency.

The revelation, [published](#) last Tuesday by *The Washington Post* and the German public broadcaster ZDF, confirmed [rumors](#) that had been circulating since the early 1980s, that Crypto AG had made a secret deal with the US government. It was believed that the Swiss-based company had allowed the US National Security Agency to read the classified messages of dozens of nations that purchased Crypto AG’s encoding equipment. These rumors were further-substantiated in 2015, when a BBC [investigation](#) unearthed evidence of a “gentleman’s agreement”, dating to 1955, between a leading NSA official and Boris Hagelin, the Norwegian-born founder and owner of Crypto AG.

But the reality of this alleged secret pact appears to have been even more controversial. According to last week’s [revelations](#), the CIA and West Germany’s Federal Intelligence Service (BND) secretly purchased the Swiss company and paid off most of its senior executives in order to buy their silence. The secret deal allegedly allowed the US and West Germany to spy on the classified government communications of several of their adversaries —and even allies, including Italy, Spain and Greece, as well as Austria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

What is more, the secret CIA/BND partnership with Crypto AG was known to senior British and Israeli officials, and information derived from it was routinely shared with them. Government officials in Switzerland and even Sweden were aware that Crypto AG had been compromised, but remained silent.

American and German authorities have not commented on the revelations. But the story has monopolized Swiss media headlines for several days. Some news outlets have [opined](#) that the traditional Swiss concept of political neutrality has been “shattered”. Meanwhile, a Swiss federal judge has opened an investigation into the revelations, as the Swiss parliament is preparing to launch an official inquiry. Switzerland’s Prime Minister, Simonetta Sommaruga, said on Sunday that the government would discuss the issue “when we have the facts”.

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