

German government plans massive expansion of spy services

By Sven Heymann
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The German government is planning to massively expand its intelligence agencies. Funding for the Federal Agency for Constitutional Protection (BfV) is to increase by 18 percent in the coming year, while the foreign intelligence service (BND) will receive a 12 percent rise. This was revealed by the research of public broadcasters NDR and WDR and the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* daily.

The expansion of the German intelligence agencies is part of a major buildup of the state apparatus at home and abroad. According to interior minister Thomas de Maizière (Christian Democratic Union), 7,000 new positions are to be created at the federal police alone between 2016 and 2020. During his speech on the budget debate last Tuesday in the parliament (Bundestag), Finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble announced, in addition to increases to the defence budget, a “significant increase in spending on internal security, up to €2.2 billion more than in the previous financial plan.”

This buildup is officially justified with reference to security deficits and gaps in the struggle against terrorism. In fact, the goal of these comprehensive measures is the most wide-ranging surveillance of the population possible and the construction of a police state.

Under conditions of increased opposition to the war drive of the major parties, growing social inequality and the sustained economic crisis, the ruling elite is making conscious preparations for the outbreak of open class struggle.

Secret budgetary documents obtained by the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* make clear the extent of the domestic security buildup. The BfV will receive a funding increase in the coming year of €45 million. With a budget of €307 million, this amounts to an 18

percent increase in just one year.

The BND is also to be strengthened significantly. Its budget will increase by 12 percent to €808 million, as the newspaper reported. This corresponds to an increase of some €86 million.

Among other things, the BND is planning to intercept, filter and process so-called non-standard communications. This will include messenger services like Whatsapp, which have increasingly replaced text messages in recent years. According to a *Focus* magazine article from February this year, more than a billion people around the world now use Whatsapp, sending more than 42 billion messages daily.

BND’s “Project Panos” is to be employed to crack the partially encrypted messages. As the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* reported, the BND can currently read only 10 of the 70 messenger services used worldwide. To end this, €21.5 million has been set aside in the budget. According to the report, the BND is not only concerned with metadata, but also the content of the chat messages exchanged. If required, external firms could be contracted to carry out the decoding.

A programme called “Zerberus” is to help the BND intercept discussions on satellite telephone. The tapping of cables at key domestic data points is also to be stepped up, as Tagesschau.de reported. In addition, a further €55 million has been made available for the “essential technical modernisation” of the BND.

The BfV’s concrete plans are not detailed in the secret documents. Nonetheless, the direction of the BfV is more than clear. The domestic intelligence service has significantly higher levels of staff than in the past, adding 470 positions already this year, and a further 100 are planned for 2017. The BfV has thus grown rapidly over recent years. If the budget is approved, the BfV’s budget will have trebled since 2000,

Tagesschau.de pointed out.

The additional resources have been aimed at deepening ties between the federal agencies and the internal security agencies in the states. In this context, the BfV is to move “in the medium term into the role of a central agency” for the state surveillance agencies, it was stated. In addition, the databases of the BfV are to be linked with those of the central register of foreign nationals (AZR). Cyberdefence is also to be strengthened.

The spying on the population is not only to be conducted via electronic means. For the expenses and paying of informants, the BfV has made available €2.8 million.

The strengthening of the domestic intelligence agency also has an important foreign policy component. The BfV has been to date heavily dependent on cooperation with the US intelligence agency NSA, including the use of its XKeyScore software, as the revelations by whistleblower Edward Snowden showed in 2013. The current developments, according to Tagesschau.de, point “to an emancipation from the US agencies. In the longer term, the German agencies are clearly planning to be capable of operating more independently.”

The Left Party and Greens support the construction of a police and surveillance state. Any critique of the government’s plans to strengthen the state apparatus comes from the right.

“It was actually the opposition that demanded more police,” said Dietmar Bartsch, the co-chair of the Left Party’s parliamentary group, as he sought to claim credit for de Maizière’s initiative. At the same time, he accused the grand coalition in parliament of being “responsible for a failed policy of personnel and budget cuts.” They had made the police a “victim of austerity” and, since 1998, “eliminated 17,000 police jobs.” What was necessary was “a state capable of action,” and that included “well-equipped and well-trained people in the public service, particularly in the police.”

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