

# Europeans Accused of “Paranoia” Over Fears of U.S. Economic Espionage, Wikileaks Documents Reveal

By [Tom Burghardt](#)

Global Research, December 08, 2010

[Antifascist Calling...](#) 8 December 2010

Region: [Europe](#)

Theme: [Intelligence](#)

Confidential State Department documents released by the whistleblowing web site [WikiLeaks](#), revealed that a European Parliamentary vote earlier this year that suspended participation in a U.S. government program that secretly monitored international bank transactions, surprised and angered the Obama administration.

In a stunning rebuke of U.S. policies the February 2010 memo, “Chancellor Merkel Angered by Lack of German MEP Support for TFTP,” [10BERLIN180](#) provided new evidence that the Terrorist Finance Tracking Program (also known as Swift) is viewed skeptically by the European public and their representatives.

Distrust of the Swift program runs deep and its “War on Terror” pedigree is considered little more than a pretext for American spies to carry out economic espionage on behalf of U.S. multinationals.

Alarmed over privacy breaches by American firms and criminal acts, such as the illegal U.S. transfer of prisoners on CIA “black flights,” aided and abetted by European intelligence agencies, outraged public opinion forced the hand of parliamentarians, who voted overwhelming to suspend the program.

German opposition to Swift “was particularly damaging” [The New York Times](#) reported, “because the country was among a handful of allies that, according to a 2006 cable, made up a ‘coalition of the constructive’ organized to ensure that the Swift operation was not ‘ruined by privacy experts’.”

Launched shortly after the 9/11 provocation by the Bush administration, the secret program handed American officials unprecedented access to global financial information on bank transactions routed through a vast database administered by the Swift consortium in Brussels.

Access to such unique data would be particularly valuable to U.S. corporations. In light of evidence published in a 2001 European Parliament [report](#) that the National Security Agency’s ECHELON program was a cover for economic espionage, such fears are not unfounded.

Since the program’s disclosure in 2006 by [The New York Times](#), criticism over its operations have mounted steadily.

CIA and Treasury Department officials secretly poured over records of some \$6 trillion dollars in daily financial transactions flowing through global banks and brokerage houses.

“European Union regulators,” the [ACLU](#) reported, “found that the mass financial prying was not legally authorized, was conducted without proper checks and balances, and violated several important rules established to protect the privacy of Europeans.”

Increasing the “creep factor” amongst EU officials, the ACLU [disclosed](#) that the ultra-spooky Booz Allen Hamilton corporation had been hired to “oversee” the program by the federal government.

Concluding that the firm was not an “independent check” on Swift surveillance, the civil liberties’ watchdogs wrote that “Booz Allen is one of the largest U.S. Government contractors, with hundreds of millions of dollars in U.S. Government contracts awarded each year. Booz Allen has a history of working closely with U.S. Government agencies on electronic surveillance, including the Total Information Awareness program.”

Initial misgivings amongst the public and privacy advocates have since blossomed into outright hostility, thus setting the stage for last summer’s vote.

### **Cynical Maneuvers**

Noting that the American-led “War on Terror” coalition is fraying at the seams, U.S. Ambassador to Berlin Philip Murphy, wrote that “Merkel is particularly irritated with German MEPs from her Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and sister Christian Social Union (CSU) parties, most of whom reportedly voted against the agreement despite previously indicating they would support it.”

The ambassador claimed that “public German reactions” to the European Parliament’s vote “have come exclusively from TFTP detractors who portrayed the veto as a sign that the European Parliament has won a victory over an arrogant Commission/Council, as well as delivering a rebuke to U.S. counterterrorism policies that undervalue data privacy.”

Free Democratic Party (FDP) Federal Justice Minister Sabine Leutheusser-Schnarrenberger, a member of Merkel’s coalition, was derided by Murphy as “a strong proponent of data privacy rights,” who had welcomed the vote saying that “the citizens of Europe have won a victory today that strengthened not just data protection, but democracy in all of Europe.”

That’s certainly a “diplomatic” way of saying they don’t trust their American allies!

Undeterred however, Murphy recommended that the U.S. crank up the [“Mighty Wurlitzer”](#) disinformation machine a decibel or two.

“These events,” the ambassador wrote, “suggest the need to intensify our engagement with German government interlocutors, Bundestag and European parliamentarians, and opinion makers to demonstrate that the U.S. has strong data privacy measures in place.”

Murphy said this “debate was not just about TFTP;” the ambassador averred that “paranoia runs deep especially about U.S. intelligence agencies.”

Those quaint denizens of “old Europe,” where do they ever get such fanciful ideas!

### **U.S. Embassies: Global Spy Nets**

In the Cablegate file, "Reporting and Collection Needs: The United Nations," [09STATEE80163](#), dated July 31, 2009 and classified SECRET/NOFORN ("no foreign distribution") we learned last week that under America's revised National HUMINT Collection Directive (NCHD) U.S. diplomats and State Department employees under CIA cover are directed to spy on key UN personnel, including Secretary General Ban Ki-moon.

State Department documents revealed that diplomats have been ordered to gather "as much of the following information as possible when they have information relating to persons linked to: office and organizational titles; names, position titles and other information on business cards; numbers of telephones, cell phones, pagers and faxes; compendia of contact information, such as telephone directories (in compact disc or electronic format if available) and e-mail listings; internet and intranet 'handles', internet e-mail addresses, web site identification-URLs; credit card account numbers; frequent flyer account numbers; work schedules, and other relevant biographical information."

U.S. overlords demanded that their diplomat-spies collect relevant data on "about current and future use of communications systems and technologies by officials or organizations, including cellular phone networks, mobile satellite phones, very small aperture terminals (VSAT), trunked and mobile radios, pagers, prepaid calling cards, firewalls, encryption, international connectivity, use of electronic data interchange, Voice-over-Internet protocol (VoIP), Worldwide interoperability for microwave access (Wi-Max), and cable and fiber networks."

Documents released so far have revealed that similar "diplomatic" spying operations are underway globally and target [Bulgaria](#); [Romania](#); [Slovenia](#); [Hungary](#); [Venezuela](#); [Paraguay](#); [Palestine](#); [African Great Lakes](#); and [West Africa](#).

Denouncing WikiLeaks for the embarrassing disclosures, not for U.S. duplicity and deceit, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, who authorized the surreptitious collection programs, said last week that covert action by its foreign service "is the role our diplomats play in serving America."

### **A "Well-Placed Source"**

Despite full knowledge, "we were astonished to learn" ambassador Murphy wrote, "how quickly rumors about alleged U.S. economic espionage—at first associated with the new U.S. air passenger registration system (ESTA), then with TFTP-gained currency among German parliamentarians in the run-up to the February 11 vote in Strasbourg."

Are there legitimate reasons perhaps, *why* "paranoia" would "run deep" among the public, or the German government for that matter, considering the track record of "U.S. intelligence agencies"?

Last Friday, German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle's chief of staff, Helmut Metzner, was sacked after he confessed he was the "young, up-and-coming party loyalist" who served as an American asset inside the Free Democratic Party, a coalition partner of Chancellor Angela Merkel's right-wing government.

[Der Spiegel](#) reported that Metzner was the "top-level national party employee responsible for passing secret information on to US diplomats during the negotiations to form the current German government in 2009."

According to the 2009 Cablegate file [09BERLIN1271](#), “Westerwelle Firm on Removal of Nuclear Weapons,” Metzner is described therein as “a well-placed FDP source.”

From his perch, Metzner was privy to sensitive information that he passed on to his American handlers; in fact the go-getter was “the head of international relations for the national party.” Rather conveniently, one might say!

Indeed, the strategist-spy “shared with Emboffs and visiting Senior Germany Desk Officer October 7 information on issues discussed during the first two days of these negotiations as well as the negotiations schedule and working group make-up. Source serves as his party’s notetaker for the negotiations and has been a long-standing close Embassy contact.”

“It’s now clear,” *Der Spiegel* reported, “why the US ambassador appeared so pleased in his cables back to Washington—after all, his mole had the ear of the head of the party and was part of the inner circle of party leadership.”

Eventually, ambassador Murphy’s call to “intensify our engagement with German government interlocutors, Bundestag and European parliamentarians, and opinion makers” over the Swift program paid off.

In July, “after mobilizing top administration officials, including Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, Treasury Secretary Timothy F. Geithner and Attorney General Eric H. Holder Jr.,” the Obama administration was able to reverse the vote in the European Parliament, “after the United States made modest concessions that promised greater European oversight,” *The New York Times* reported.

“Concessions” that will accelerate the erosion of privacy rights while enhancing U.S. efforts to steal economic secrets from their capitalist rivals.

Tuesday’s arrest of Julian Assange in Britain on a dubious Swedish warrant, and the court’s refusal to grant the activist/journalist bail, will not stop the leaks. Despite intense pressure from the Pentagon, the State Department and lickspittle American politicians, more than 500 web sites currently [mirror](#) WikiLeaks.

The steady drip, drip, drip of dark secrets will continue, as will further revelations of U.S. crimes.

*Tom Burghardt is a researcher and activist based in the San Francisco Bay Area. In addition to publishing in Covert Action Quarterly and [Global Research](#), his articles can be read on [Dissident Voice](#), [The Intelligence Daily](#), [Pacific Free Press](#), [Uncommon Thought Journal](#), and the whistleblowing website [WikiLeaks](#). He is the editor of Police State America: U.S. Military “Civil Disturbance” Planning, distributed by [AK Press](#) and has contributed to the new book from [Global Research](#), *The Global Economic Crisis: The Great Depression of the XXI Century*.*

The original source of this article is [Antifascist Calling...](#)

Copyright © [Tom Burghardt](#), [Antifascist Calling...](#), 2010

---

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

## **Become a Member of Global Research**

Articles by: Tom Burghardt  
[http://antifascist-calling.blogspot.co](http://antifascist-calling.blogspot.com/)  
[m/](http://antifascist-calling.blogspot.com/)

**Disclaimer:** The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: [publications@globalresearch.ca](mailto:publications@globalresearch.ca)

[www.globalresearch.ca](http://www.globalresearch.ca) contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: [publications@globalresearch.ca](mailto:publications@globalresearch.ca)