

US Spied on German Media

New revelations indicate NSA spying in Germany went beyond German officials

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New reporting reveals that the Obama administration spied on German journalists. (Photo: [Patrick Lauke](#)/flickr/cc)

While previous revelations showed that German officials have been the target of U.S. government spying, new reporting indicates that German press was targeted as well.

Both [CNN](#) and [The Intercept](#) reported Friday on incidents that took place in the summer of 2011 involving the CIA station chief in Berlin, who also represented the NSA at the U.S. Embassy; a top German government intelligence official, Günter Heiss; another senior intelligence official, Hans Josef Vorbeck; and the German news magazine *Der Spiegel*.

The publications' new stories detail an incident Heiss confirmed in testimony to the German parliament on Thursday.

CNN's Jake Tapper reports that that CIA official met at the time with Heiss and his assistant to urge action against Vorbeck for leaking classified information to reporters.

The Intercept also reported Friday that the CIA official told Heiss that Vorbeck was leaking information to the press—a disclosure that the Obama administration told the German publication was because of national security concerns. Further, the revelation appears to have prompted Vorbeck's demotion later that summer. Tapper adds that Vorbeck's reassignment was "a move widely seen as a punishment for his cooperating with reporters."

Tapper writes:

That the U.S. government thought it appropriate to spy on journalists doing their jobs is controversial enough. But why would it be appropriate for U.S. officials to use these tools — given to save lives and protect U.S. national security — to notify the German government about officials talking to reporters in the normal exercise of a free press?

The Intercept reports the German magazine as suspecting that the U.S. knew of the leak because of electronic surveillance, though the specific target of the surveillance remains unknown.

The Intercept's Ryan Devereaux writes:

The revelations, the latest in a series of disclosures detailing the fraught and intertwined intelligence relationship between German and American entities, offer an example of how the Obama administration, known for its aggressive approach to national security leaks at home, similarly asserts itself in leak cases abroad.

Spiegel [reported](#) Friday that it had filed a legal complaint with its federal prosecutor's office over the suspected surveillance.

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