

Belgian Prosecutors Investigate German Spying



Brussels, June 8 (RHC)-- Prosecutors in Belgium have opened an investigation into claims of extensive spying by Germany, which has allegedly cooperated with the United States in snooping on Berlin's European allies.

Jean-Pascal Thoreau, a spokesman for federal prosecutors, said Sunday that the probe mainly seeks to find out "the exact nature of the acts that may have been committed and could be prosecuted."

According to Belgian media, the inquiry was launched on Friday and after reports about German BND spy agency's assistance to the US National Security Agency (NSA) with collecting data on European targets, including the French government, European Commission and Airbus Group.

The Belgian telecom regulator and intelligence service have already been assigned with two other investigations on allegations of widespread surveillance. Telecoms Minister Alexander de Croo said on Friday that if the reports of wide-scale eavesdropping by the German secret services turn out to be true, "Germany will have to provide an explanation."

Leaked secret documents recently published by German media have suggested that the BND has been carrying out illegal spying activities on behalf of the NSA since 2002.

Germany has also launched two parliamentary inquiries regarding the spying claims. German Chancellor Angela Merkel said on May 4th that she would fully cooperate with a parliamentary investigation committee probing the accusations.

Members of the opposition in the German parliament have harshly criticized the government over the alleged spying activities, demanding clear explanations and more information on the issue. The scandal is also gaining momentum in Europe, where outraged lawmakers from countries that reportedly fell victim to the German espionage have called on Berlin to cooperate with the European allies instead of collaborating with the US spy agency.

In 2013, Edward Snowden, a former NSA contractor, blew the whistle on the agency, suggesting that Washington had been conducting massive Internet and phone data spying on "friendly countries and their leaders," including Germany.

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