

WIKILEAKS REVEALS STEINMEIER INTERCEPTS, 2 YEARS BEFORE HELPING CONDI LOOK UNCONCERNED BY KIDNAPPING LIABILITIES

In its latest release on the individual intercepts the NSA collected on top German officials, WikiLeaks revealed that Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier had been a priority 2 target in NSA's monitoring of German political affairs.

S2C32	+49304000XXXX	FRG CHANC STATE SEC STEINMEIER	2002-388*	101214	2	Germany: Political Affairs
S2C32	+49173608XXXX	FRG MFA FOREIGN MINISTER STEINMEIER CELL	2002-388*	101214	2	Germany: Political Affairs

The actual intercept released with today's list of targets pertains to Steinmeier's first visit to DC as Foreign Minister in November 2005.

The intercept described how Steinmeier was pleased to have gotten a non-committal answer from Condi Rice when he asked her whether the CIA had run rendition flights through Germany.

(TS//SI//NF) New German Foreign Minister
Pleased With First Official
Visit to Washington

(TS//SI//NF) Frank-
Walter Steinmeier seemed pleased on 29 N
ovember
with the results of his first visit to W
ashington as the new German
Foreign Minister. Steinmeier described t
he mood during his talks with
U.S. officials as very good, but feared
that the most difficult part
was still ahead. He seemed relieved that
he had not received any
definitive response from the U.S. Secret
ary of State regarding press
reports of CIA flights through Germany t

o secret prisons in eastern Europe allegedly used for interrogating terrorism suspects. Steinmeier remarked that Washington is placing great hope in his country's new government. In this connection, he is looking for areas where bilateral cooperation can be strengthened and is considering the southern Caucasus as one possible area.

This would have been of particular concern for Steinmeier as he was Chief of Staff in German's Chancellery, in charge of intelligence. If German intelligence did know about the flights, he would be complicit. So he might be particularly happy to report that the US – that Condi Rice – was officially giving a non-answer to the question of whether or not the CIA was using Germany as a base for its kidnapping flights.

Better to officially not know.

Now, I actually am not at all troubled that NSA is wiretapping foreign officials. They're surely doing the same to our equivalents. So while I'm interested in what these WikiLeaks releases say about our NSA activities, I'm not critical of these activities.

But I am interested that Steinmeier was wiretapped for this reason.

As a State cable released by WikiLeaks back in 2010 showed, in 2007, Steinmeier and Condi met to discuss the recent arrest warrants issued by a German court. Steinmeier came out of the meeting and said publicly that Condi had told him she and the US would have no problem with the issue of arrest warrants for 13 US agents. After Steinmeier created that impression in the press, the Deputy Chief of the Mission to Germany corrected that impression, making it clear that the US had a very big problem with the planned arrest of its agents for kidnapping.

Just as the German prosecutor issued arrest warrants for 13 CIA personnel, Condi Rice and Germany's Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier met in DC for a discussion of Mideast peace efforts. After they met, Steinmeier told the German press that Condi had assured him that the arrest warrants wouldn't affect German-US relations.

Steinmeier told the *Welt am Sonntag* newspaper that he had raised the issue with US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, who "assured me there would be no negative impact on German-American relations."

Steinmeier, whose remarks were released a day ahead of publication on Sunday, said he told Rice the warrants could only be served in Germany at present, but the government expected the court to issue international warrants at some stage.

The cable describes a February 6, 2007 meeting in which the Deputy Chief of Mission of the US Embassy in Germany, John Koenig, "corrected" the impression that Steinmeier had gotten from his meeting with Condi the week before.

In a February 6 discussion with German Deputy National Security Adviser Rolf Nickel, the DCM reiterated our strong concerns about the possible issuance of international arrest warrants in the al-Masri case. The DCM noted that the reports in the German media of the discussion on the issue between the Secretary and FM Steinmeier in Washington were not accurate, in that the media

reports suggest the USG was not troubled by developments in the al-Masri case. The DCM emphasized that this was not the case and that issuance of international arrest warrants would have a negative impact on our bilateral relationship. He reminded Nikel of the repercussions to U.S.-Italian bilateral relations in the wake of a similar move by Italian authorities last year.

Koenig goes on to note that the government would have political problems in the US if the Germans issued the international arrest warrants.

The DCM pointed out that the USG would likewise have a difficult time in managing domestic political implications if international arrest warrants are issued.

[snip]

[T]his was obviously a hastily called meeting in response to Steinmeier's quotation of Condi's assurances the warrants wouldn't cause a problem. Note the specific language Koenig uses:

The DCM noted that the reports in the German media of the discussion on the issue between the Secretary and FM Steinmeier in Washington were not accurate, in that the media reports suggest the USG was not troubled by developments in the al-Masri case.

He's not telling the Germans that Steinmeier was wrong, that he mis-quoted

Condi. Rather, Koenig's simply saying that the content—what Condi had said—was wrong.

While the cable makes it clear that Koenig was emphasizing the stance of the USG, it's still not clear whether Condi just lied to Steinmeier about USG concern, using that as cover for the kidnapping that she, who was National Security Advisor during the kidnapping, would have been implicated in, or whether Steinmeier knowingly put disinformation into the press that State subordinates could correct in secret. That is, it's not clear how knowingly Steinmeier served as a stooge in US disinformation that ultimately protected Condi.

But I do find the continuity of Steinmeier's happiness about pretending there was no kidnapping going on in Germany to be notable. I also find it notable that Condi and her friends would have had very detailed understanding of Steinmeier's opinions and activities from the interim period.