

European politicians deny US claims of terror threat

Stefan Steinberg
7 October 2010

A number of leading European politicians have publicly denied recent US claims of an imminent threat of terrorist attack somewhere in Europe.

Last Sunday, the US State Department issued a vague statement warning American citizens in Europe of the danger of attacks by terrorist organisations linked to Al Qaeda. No specific country was mentioned in the State Department statement.

On the same day, the Rupert Murdoch-owned media outlets Fox News in the US and the News of the World in Great Britain issued lurid reports warning of potential Mumbai-style terror attacks in specific European countries. The media outlets named Britain, Germany and France as “high threat” targets for terrorist attacks, even specifying popular tourist attractions such as the Eiffel Tower and Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris, the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin, Berlin’s main railway station, its television tower and its most prominent hotel, the Adlon.

Britain, Japan, Sweden and Canada promptly followed the American lead, issuing alerts to their own citizens in Europe to take extra precautions. Earlier this week, French Defense Minister Hervé Morin and Interior Minister Brice Hortefeux also followed the US initiative and expressed their concern over a new terrorist threat in Europe. French police evacuated the Eiffel Tower for a second time in a week following telephone threats, and on Tuesday French security forces arrested 11 people claiming they had links to Islamic extremist circles.

Other leading European politicians, however, have gone on record denying the US State Department claims. At a meeting held by the German Konrad Adenauer Foundation on Tuesday (6 October) European Union Justice Commissioner Viviane Reding denied that there was any imminent threat of terror

attacks in Europe.

Reding told the meeting that the US terrorism alert for Europe was not based on any new security developments and did not therefore require additional security measures: “On the terror alert in the US, some European ministers have given the answer already—they have said there is nothing new, and that threats have been on the table for several years.”

Reding’s remarks regarding “European ministers” refer to comments made in particular by the German Interior Minister Thomas de Maiziere (Christian Democratic Union), who warned on Monday against alarmism following the US terror alert. In an official government statement issued on Wednesday de Maiziere once again stressed: “To summarize, there are currently no concrete indications of imminent attacks in Germany.”

The statements by Reding and de Maiziere unequivocally refuted the claims made by the US State Department at the weekend. The bluntness of their remarks is unusual, but is in line with the scepticism expressed by a number of security experts over the US reports. The source of the latest US terror claims is alleged to be the confession made by a 36-year-old German national captured by NATO forces in July in Afghanistan. The man, Ahmed Sidiqi, is currently being held captive at the US military’s Bagram air base near Kabul, where he is being interrogated by US officers.

Based on previous US practice Sidiqi has very likely been tortured. A number of security experts have declared that based on the release of material from intelligence sources the information received from Sidiqi provides no evidence of any concrete measures linked to a terrorist action. At most his “confession” points to an “intent” to carry out an action.

A German official has also been allowed access to Sidiqi. Based on his interview with the prisoner, the official reported to the German interior ministry that there were no grounds for believing that a terror attack was imminent. Some commentaries in the German media also played down the possibility of a terrorist attack in Europe, noting that such US-led terror scares primarily served a domestic purpose.

The most recent denial of an imminent terror danger by the German interior minister on Wednesday follows reports that a number of German citizens had been killed in a new US drone attack carried out on Monday.

According to media reports, a number of Germans died in an attack carried out by a US drone on a hideout of Islamist militants located in the North Waziristan region of Pakistan near the border with Afghanistan. The initial reports on the deaths of German citizens were highly contradictory, with two leading news agencies (Reuters and DPA) reporting eight German casualties, while two other agencies (Associated Press and AFP) referred to five German victims. The reports also gave contradictory versions regarding the nationality of the other victims of the attack.

Conflicting information also emerged regarding the target of the attack. While most reports declared that the target of the drone was a private house, Reuters reported that the building which was hit and completely demolished was a mosque. One local resident had told the news agency that people had gathered for prayer in the mosque when the missile struck. The site of the impact was then apparently cordoned off by insurgents.

Having dismissed US claims of an imminent terror danger in Europe, the German Interior Minister has also gone on record to question the US version of Monday's drone attack.

De Maizière told *Deutschlandfunk* on Wednesday: "What really surprises me is that this attack by an unmanned drone took place apparently the day before yesterday in an inaccessible region, and nevertheless identity documents were found". In the same interview, he went on to declare that the possibility of a terror attack in Germany remained "hypothetical".

De Maizière is a conservative politician (like Reding) and a leading member of the German government, which has consistently supported the US war of aggression in Afghanistan. Nevertheless as the war threatens to turn into a debacle, with growing

opposition inside Pakistan to America's efforts to turn the country into a new battle field, de Maizière's refutations of the latest US terror scare point to growing tensions between the transatlantic partners.

Friction had already arisen in the recent past following Washington's repeated pressure on Germany, along with other European nations, to increase troop commitments and at the same time undertake more aggressive military action inside Afghanistan. Until now, the German government has repeatedly backed down and sought to accommodate US demands.

More recently the US exerted intense pressure on EU authorities to allow US agencies access to additional European police databases providing DNA samples, fingerprints, access to criminal registers and other information—all in the name of the war on terrorism. Once again Germany and a number of other European countries have bowed to the wishes of the US State Department.

Now, however, US authorities are seeking to justify their intensified drone bombing campaign in Pakistan by claiming they are working to thwart a terror strike in Europe. Those countries which sign up to the US terror campaign for their own domestic purposes—such as Britain and France—automatically lend their support to the US military expansion into Pakistan.

The latest comments by Reding and de Maizière refuting the US terror scare campaign indicate that some sections of the European bourgeoisie are increasingly reluctant to blindly follow the US in a war in Afghanistan and Pakistan that threatens to end in catastrophe and in turn bring the real danger of a terrorist response in Germany and Europe.



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact