

Germany's Publicizing of Spy Case Causes Head-Scratching

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The  Moscow Times

The German government offered the Kremlin a spy swap involving the exchange of a couple arrested in Germany on charges of being Russian sleeper agents, a news report said.

German officials asked Russian Ambassador Vladimir Grinin in March to swap Andreas and Heidrun Anschlag for two Russians sentenced to jail time on charges of spying for the West, newspaper Die Welt am Sonntag reported Sunday.

Russia did not respond to the offer, however, and prosecutors decided to charge the two suspects, the report said, citing no one.

German federal prosecutors said in a [statement](#) last month that the couple, who were arrested last October, had spied for Moscow for more than 20 years, posing as an Austrian couple who had previously lived in Latin America.

Their surname was officially withheld but has been confirmed by The Moscow Times.

Neither German nor Russian officials had commented on the report by Monday, but experts pointed out that Berlin's handling of the case showed significant differences from a case involving a ring of illegal agents uncovered in the United States in 2010, a group that included the now famous Anna Chapman.

Andrei Soldatov, a security analyst with the Agentura.ru think tank, said it was strange that German authorities had permitted much wider publicity in the case.

"The Germans limited the scandal much less than the Americans, despite the fact that their intelligence services have such good ties with Moscow," Soldatov said.

In the 2010 U.S. case, investigators presented the charges against the 10 sleeper agents at a New York City court hearing on June 29, one day after their arrest. Less than two weeks later, the suspects were flown to Russia in a Cold War-style spy swap on July 9.

By contrast, 11 months passed between the October 2011 detention of the Anshlags and the public announcement of charges being brought against them on Sept. 14, and both events received widespread media coverage.

Soldatov said Germany's federal intelligence agency, also known as the BND, is said to enjoy better relations with its Moscow counterparts than most other Western agencies.

In 2000, then-BND head August Hanning even visited Chechnya while a war with separatists and Islamic extremists was in full swing.

Hans-Henning Schröder, an analyst with the German Institute for International and Security Affairs, agreed that the publicity of the case was peculiar. "This story could easily have been solved secretly," he said by telephone from Berlin.

According to prosecutors, the Anshlags, who had last lived near the central German city of Marburg, passed official documents from NATO and the European Union to Moscow that they obtained through an agent from the Dutch Foreign Ministry.

That agent was identified by Dutch and German media reports as Raymond Poeteray, a diplomat and one-time vice consul of the Netherlands to Hong Kong. Poeteray was arrested in June.

Prosecutors said the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service, or SVR, had paid the couple 100,000 euros (\$130,600) per year for their work. Their information was passed on to Moscow via satellite and through coded messages on YouTube.

It was unclear who the pair could have been swapped for. In 2006, Moscow City Court sentenced a man identified as Andrei Dumenkov to 12 years in prison on charges of trying to pass information on rocket technologies to Germany.

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