

Media says Obama knew US spied on Merkel

29th October, 2013



Several German news sources are questioning how much President Obama knows about the US spying on German Chancellor Angela

Merkel. The 'Spiegel' magazine reported that the USA's National Security Agency (NSA) started tapping Ms Merkel's mobile telephone in 2002, under the George W. Bush administration. It says President Obama knew that the tap was still in place as early as 2010, before he visited Berlin in June of that year to tell Germans of the warm friendship that existed between their two countries. A newspaper reported that the contents of Ms Merkel's SMS messages and phone calls went straight to the White House. The US Embassy in Berlin was used as a base for the surveillance.

The spying allegedly began when former German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder was in office. US intelligence sources were suspicious of his refusal to support the second Iraq War. Obama told Ms Merkel last week that he had not known of the bugging. However, a media report cites an NSA official who said Mr Obama ordered the programme to be escalated. A document from the NSA warned of "grave damage for relations" if its spying programme was discovered. Ms Merkel is shocked that the USA may have engaged in the sort of spying she thought was a relic of the Cold War. She was also spied on in the former East Germany, before the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe.

Sources: Die Welt / BBC / IB Times

Writing

Countries should never spy on the leaders of other countries. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

news sources / spying / mobile phone / administration / friendship / surveillance / intelligence sources / suspicious / bugging / escalated / Cold War / communism

True / False

- The article says American media is asking questions about the spying. T / F
- The USA may have started tapping Merkel's phone in 2002. T / F
- A magazine said President Obama knew about the spying from 2008. T / F
- The White House was used as the base for spying on Angela Merkel. T / F
- The spying supposedly began with Ms Merkel's predecessor. T / F
- Obama told Merkel he had known nothing about her bugged telephone. T / F
- A US agency warned spying could damage international relations. T / F
- Angela Merkel spied on other people before the Berlin Wall came down. T / F

Synonym Match

- | | |
|-------------------|-----------------|
| 1. sources | a. intensified |
| 2. tapping | b. cordial |
| 3. administration | c. headquarters |
| 4. warm | d. supposedly |
| 5. base | e. references |
| 6. allegedly | f. serious |
| 7. suspicious | g. ex- |
| 8. escalated | h. monitoring |
| 9. grave | i. doubtful |
| 10. former | j. government |

Discussion – Student A

- How might relations between Obama and Merkel be from now?
- What do you think the two would say to each other if they met?
- What "grave damages" might there be for the USA?
- Don't all countries spy on other leaders?
- Is spying today more prevalent than before?
- When do you think countries will stop spying on each other?
- What questions would you like to ask Angela Merkel?
- What do you think her answers might be?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. questioning how much | a. in the former E. Germany |
| 2. Obama knew that the tap was | b. damage |
| 3. the warm | c. for the surveillance |
| 4. the contents of | d. was a relic of the Cold War |
| 5. used as a base | e. of communism |
| 6. a media report cites | f. Ms Merkel's SMS messages |
| 7. grave | g. an NSA official |
| 8. the sort of spying she thought | h. President Obama knows |
| 9. She was also spied on | i. friendship that existed |
| 10. the collapse | j. still in place |

Discussion – Student B

- What do you think about what you read?
- What should Barack Obama do to apologise?
- What do you think of the USA for spying on Germany's leaders?
- Should Germans be angry about this scandal?
- How damaging might the information from Ms Merkel's calls be?
- Should the German government move the US Embassy in Berlin?
- What questions would you like to ask Barack Obama?
- What do you think his answers might be?

Spelling

- German news cuesors
- German acnrloheCl Angela Merkel
- the George W. Bush motiianrsditan
- the warm friendship that estxeid
- Ms Merkel's SMS smaseesg
- used as a base for the ialeuvnesrlc
- The spying lgaeldeyl began when...
- sicssiuuop of his refusal
- a media report siect an NSA official
- ordered the programme to be acdleaest
- a lrcei of the Cold War
- the collapse of oinucmsmm

Answers – Synonym Match

1. e	2. h	3. j	4. b	5. c
6. d	7. i	8. a	9. f	10. g

Role Play

Role A – Angela Merkel

You are furious with Barack Obama. Tell the others three reasons why. You want Mr Obama to apologise for his and his country's actions. He must appear in Berlin and say sorry to German people live on TV. He must also release all details of how the US spied on you.

Role B – Barack Obama

The spying is no big deal. All governments do it. You do not think you have to give any big apologies. The US did nothing wrong. Tell the others three reasons why you think so. Tell Ms Merkel she is over-reacting. Her government also spies on other leaders.

Role C – Head of US intelligence

You are angry the world found out about the tap on Angela Merkel's phone. Tell the others three reasons why. You think Barack Obama should stay silent on this issue. It will go away. Tell Ms Merkel that the tapping was OK because you didn't hear any of her secrets.

Role D – Head of German security

You are angry your security services did not prevent the tap on Angela Merkel's phone. Tell the others three reasons why. You think the USA must now give all details of its spying programme. Tell Barack Obama he must resign for agreeing to the tapping of Ms Merkel's phone.

Speaking – State security

Rank these and share your rankings with your partner. Put the most important for state security at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- military security
- political security
- economic security
- security of borders
- environmental security
- food and water security
- energy security
- cybersecurity

Answers – True False

a	F	b	T	c	F	d	F	e	T	f	T	g	T	h	F
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.