

German intel head threatens whistleblower site

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In the latest twist in a scandal involving the presence of the German intelligence service or Bundesnachrichtendienst (BND) in the Balkan nation of Kosovo, the head of the BND has [ordered](#) whistleblower website Wikileaks to remove all BND-related files under threat of "immediate prosecution."



Wikileaks has responded with a press release noting that the demands have no legal force outside Germany, so the order "must be assumed to be an attempt to engage Wikileaks via its German component -- or does Mr. Uhlrau suggest it is now BND policy to kidnap foreign journalists and try them before German courts?"

According to Wikileaks, "The threats, made by BND President Ernst Uhlrau, were triggered by the Wikileaks publication of an article by Tom Burghardt, a US journalist, on the BND's bungled Kosovo operation, together with a classified BND dossier on senior Kosovo figures from 2005 -- both of which were specifically named by Mr. Uhlrau."

The Kosovo scandal began on November 19, when three Germans were [arrested](#) in Kosovo's capital of Pristina on suspicion of throwing explosives at the European Union office. The men, who said they were not behind the incident but were merely observing the crime scene, were identified by the German paper *Spiegel* as BND agents.

Germany is one of the strongest diplomatic and financial [supporters](#) of the government in Kosovo, which declared its independence from Serbia last February, and the BND is known to be active there.

BND sources charged that the incident was the work of local radicals, who are opposed to the deployment of EU forces in their country to replace UN peacekeepers in certain areas, which they see as likely to lead to an eventual partition of the country into a Serbian half and an Albanian half.

However, other analysts [suggested](#) that the high-profile arrests might represent an attempt to embarrass the BND by Kosovo's prime minister, who was accused in the 2005 BND report of being involved with organized crime.

The [article](#) by researcher Tom Burghardt, which Wikileaks sees as a primary cause of the BND order,

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describes Kosovo as both "a European narco state" and "a militarized outpost for Western capitalist powers intent on spreading their tentacles East, encircling Russia and penetrating the former spheres of influence of the ex-Soviet Union."

"For the ruling elites of the former Yugoslavia and their Western allies, Kosovo is a veritable goldmine," Burghardt writes. "Situated in the heart of the Balkans, Kosovo's government is deeply tied to organized crime structures: narcotrafficking, arms smuggling, car theft rings and human trafficking that feeds the sex slave 'industry.' These operations are intimately linked to American destabilization campaigns and their cosy ties to on-again, off-again intelligence assets that include al-Qaeda and other far-right terror gangs."

Burghardt implies that the incident may have been meant as a slap on the wrist to the BND for "stepping on the CIA's toes and that agency's cosy intelligence 'understanding' with Mafia-linked KLA fighters and al-Qaeda assets." Whether he is correct or not, it does seem that the BND chief would like to see his speculations suppressed.