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EU plans independent intelligence agency: Report

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The European Union (EU) is planning to assemble an independent intelligence body of its own in “an urgent response” to the recent revelation that the US has been spying on EU officials as well as European citizens.

The planned apparatus, which will be set up by owning and operating spy drones, surveillance satellites and espionage aircraft by the EU itself, will be used for “internal security and defence purposes,” the *Telegraph* reported, citing “officials.”

According to the report, the European Commission and the European External Action Service (EEAS), a department of the EU, are behind the plan.

The decision to assess the agency in the EU came following the recent US spying scandal, involving the National Security Agency (NSA). The NSA was plagued by the scandal when US whistleblower Edward Snowden disclosed documents showing that the NSA was involved in espionage activities on a global scale, including against the EU.

“The Edward Snowden scandal shows us that Europe needs its own autonomous security capabilities, this proposal is one step further towards European defense integration,” said a senior EU official, whose name was not mentioned in the report.

The EU proposals, which have been prepared to assess the move, say “the commission will work with the EEAS on a joint assessment of dual-use capability needs for EU security and defence policies.”

“On the basis of this assessment, it will come up with a proposal for which capability needs, if any, could best be fulfilled by assets directly purchased, owned and operated by the Union.”

According to European Union sources, EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton, the European Commission and France, Germany, Italy, Spain and Poland all are in favor of the plans.

Meanwhile, Geoffrey Van Orden, a European parliamentarian, accused the European Commission of being “obsessed” with promoting the “EU’s military ambitions.”

“It would be alarming if the EU - opaque, unaccountable, bureaucratic and desperately trying to turn itself into a federal state - were to try and create an intelligence gathering capability of its own. This is something that we need to stop in its tracks before it is too late,” said Van Orden.