



Analysis

The Arab Spring of “Security made in Germany”

Eric Töpfer

Investigative journalists have revealed a secret mission by the German Federal Police to train border guards in Saudi Arabia. The episode sheds light on the much broader engagement of the German security-industrial complex in arming authoritarian monarchies in the Gulf region.

More than 500 German police officers are posted to foreign countries. They act as liaison officers, train colleagues, bolster border controls, support document checks at consulates, guard German embassies and police crisis regions under the flag of the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) or the European Union. [1] It is well known that the largest of the German police force’s foreign missions are taking place in Afghanistan and Kosovo where almost 300 officers complement the military engagement of NATO troops. Nonetheless, it came as a surprise when it was revealed in April 2011 that another major mission is taking place in Saudi Arabia. Two weeks after soldiers from the oil-rich kingdom crossed the border into Bahrain to defend its ruling elite against the democratic protest movement, it coincided with a TV magazine *FAKT* report that dozens of German Federal Police officers were training thousands of border guards in the desert. [2] Moreover, the mission was reported to be closely linked to a billion dollar deal, involving European arms giant EADS-Cassidian, that includes the installation of a high-tech surveillance system along Saudi Arabia’s 9,000 km sea and land borders. It is “the world’s most important contract for security technology,” according to Cassidian CEO Stefan Zoller. [3]

Deal involving EADS exports

Although the German government denies that the training mission was *sine qua non* for the deal between EADS and the Arab kingdom, the details

that became public suggest another story. In spring 2007, high-level talks began between EADS and the German Ministry of Interior (Mol); EADS manager Stefan Zoller met with Mol State Secretary August Hanning to discuss the planned modernisation of Saudi Arabia’s border controls. They continued their exchange in October, considering a possible project design, and at the end of the year EADS submitted its bid to the Saudi Arabian Interior Ministry. At the same time the German Federal Police presented a training programme to officials in Saudi Arabia’s capital city of Riyadh. In June 2008, Riyadh gave the green light for both the EADS offer and the German training programme. Over the following months representatives from the German Mol and the Federal Police visited Saudi Arabia on several fact-finding missions in order to develop the training concept in detail. In December 2008 a German project office was opened in Riyadh and the first training courses began in February 2009. [4] Three months later, on 28 May 2009, the German Minister for Interior, Wolfgang Schäuble, visited Riyadh and signed an agreement “on cooperation in the field of security,” with his counterpart. The agreement addressed, among other issues, “collaboration in the field of security training.” [5] A month later EADS announced that after years of negotiations it had signed a contract for the large-scale border surveillance system. [6]

Markus Hellenthal played a key role in arranging the deal. From 2004 until 2007 he managed the “Global Security” team at EADS Defence and Communication

Systems, the “system house” of the corporation and part of the Defence and Security Division that became Cassidian. Hellenthal served as a high-ranking police officer in the Directorate of the German Federal Border Police (today the Federal Police) until the mid-1990s and then became a senior civil servant as head of the Department for Border Police and Aviation Security within the German Mol. After leaving the civil service in 1997 for jobs in the private sector he became a consultant for the global IT company Accenture and was based in Riyadh before he moved to EADS to launch the “Global Security” business line. He was able to attain major system integration contracts for border security in Romania and Qatar and to be shortlisted for the Saudi Arabia Border Guard modernisation programme. After preparing the ground for the potential deal between EADS, the Saudi Arabian government and the German Mol, Hellenthal expanded his career as the EADS lobbyist in Brussels which started when he became chairman of the European Security Research Advisory Board in 2005.[7]

Drawing on its extensive experience in installing Command Control Communication Computers and Intelligence (C3I) systems for the military realm, EADS is now installing a network of sensors along Saudi Arabia’s border that will be integrated by five regional, and one national, control centres. The German Federal Police will train the higher ranks of the Saudi Arabia Border Guard in how to assess and respond to the sensor data transferred to the control centres; in other words, they give lessons in situation awareness and command and control. For this purpose the German trainers were introduced to the detection and surveillance technology delivered by EADS as part of their preparation for the foreign mission. In addition, they will train the rank and file of the Border Guard in how to “handle weapons” (the German G3 rifle delivered by Heckler & Koch), surveillance and reconnaissance, search and arrest of persons, search of vehicles, and “self-defence to German police standards.” During the early phase of the mission, Saudi Arabia’s troops were also trained in searching houses and policing crowds, but the German government claims that these training modules have now ceased. [8]

Since the launch of the mission, around 80 German officers have been in Riyadh, Al Shouba and ArAr, desert outposts close to the border with Iraq. Most left the country after ten weeks but at least a dozen are staffing training camps on long-term duty. Although the training camps on the Iraq border are supposed to close at the end of 2012, courses are planned in other border areas for the next five years, staffed with up to 50 German trainers. By August

2011 the cost to German taxpayers reached €3.2 million for basic staff salaries and equipment. Additional costs of €7.6 million, covering foreign service bonuses and travel costs, have been transferred by the Saudi Arabian government via the local Al Rashid Corporation and EADS to the Organisation for International Cooperation (GIZ), the German development agency which eventually paid Federal Police trainers.

Information about the mission given to the German Parliament before it became public was negligible. Regular reports listing foreign police missions simply noted “basic training for executives of Saudi Arabia Border Guard” taking place “on an occasional basis,” if they mentioned Saudi Arabia at all. [9] There was no word about the number of staff, the scale of the engagement or the relationship with EADS. Only whistleblowing by police officers, who were frustrated by their working conditions in Saudi Arabia and by the context of their engagement, brought the story to light. When grilled by the Parliamentary Committee for the Interior, Mol representatives played down the issue and pointed to the fact that similar deals, integrating the delivery of technical equipment and training, had been sealed with Qatar and Yemen under former Minister for Interior, Otto Schily (Social Democrats). Although admitting the “problematic” nature of cooperation with authoritarian regimes they stressed that Germany’s strategic partnership with Saudi Arabia was of “direct security interest,” recalling crucial information that led to the detection of parcel bombs on flights from Yemen to the United States in October 2010 came from sources in Saudi Arabia. [10] One aim of the cooperation, they added, is the transfer of the “rule of law,” the effects of which, as being a “fluid process,” can hardly be measured in a different cultural context. That Saudi Arabia’s Mol requested German police officers for the job indicates, they maintain, the interest of the strategic partner in good governance. [11]

Brothers in arms: Germany and the oil sheikhs

The mission, and its justification, is typical of German policy towards authoritarian monarchies in the Gulf region in general and Saudi Arabia in particular. It is one episode in a series of deals between the German military-security-industrial complex and the Arab sheikhs and sultans. In summer 2011, it was revealed that the Federal Security Council had secretly approved the export of 200 Krauss-Maffei Wegmann’s Leopard 2 tanks and a factory to build under licence Heckler & Koch’s automatic G36 rifle (firing 750 bullets per minute) to Saudi Arabia. [12] The Gulf monarchies have become important customers for the German arms industry

over the course of the 21st century. Arms exports to Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates increased from €65 million in 2000 to €793 million in 2009 - 11 per cent of the total German arms exports and one third of the exports to non-Western countries. Within a decade their share has multiplied tenfold. [13] As German arms suppliers increasingly target non-traditional markets in response to cuts at home, the Gulf region has become crucial to stabilising profits and arming forces at home with cutting-edge technology. Thus, the engagement of companies like EADS, [14] Rheinmetall or Krauss-Maffei Wegmann has the full support of the German national security establishment.

As part of the “global war against terrorism,” cooperation has also increased in matters of internal security. Before Berlin signed the agreement on security cooperation with Saudi Arabia in May 2009, similar agreements were sealed with the United Arab Emirates (2005), Kuwait (2007) and Qatar (2009). They went unnoticed by the public, although their scope covers much more than terrorism. From the agreements that are publicly available, we know that their stated aim is the prevention and investigation of all kinds of crime ranging from terrorism and drug trafficking to illegal migration, computer crime, copyright violations and property crime. [15] Thus, the German training mission in Saudi Arabia might be the largest but it is not the only one in the Gulf region. Between 2008 and 2010, German police officers trained bodyguards in Oman and coastal guards in Qatar; they tutored colleagues in the United Arab Emirates on how to protect and search VIP residences and in hostage-taking negotiations; they instructed border police in Oman, Qatar, Kuwait and United Arab Emirates on issues of airport and border security, identity and document verification, and they transferred expert knowledge in operative case management and online investigation to Oman and the United Arab Emirates. [16]

It is unknown if, and how, the training was integrated with the delivery of technical equipment such as the “National Shield” border surveillance system purchased by Qatar from EADS or with smaller contracts for online surveillance and data mining

software. What is known is that the German Mol and police forces often pursue what they call “sustainable” cooperation, [17] meaning the integrated delivery of training and equipment, and in recent months it has become apparent that the German security industry is aggressively promoting homeland defence products in the Middle East. [18] Meanwhile, their efforts to diversify markets has gained the support of the Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology, which in November 2010 presented its *Future Market Civil Security* initiative aiming to promote the export of “Security Made in Germany.” [19]

Other aspects of German cooperation with the Gulf region include information exchange and coordinated operations. The available security agreements include a chapter on data protection, bearing the hallmarks of German bureaucracy. These chapters provide for principles of data security and accuracy, mutual notification - if requested - on the processing of transferred personal data, purpose binding and even rights to access and remedy for affected individuals. However, as the agreements allow transferred data to be processed for the purpose of preventing and investigating “significant criminal offences,” and as national law is supposed to govern access rights, these data protection regimes are useless paper tigers, obviously meant to appease potential concerns in Germany. Thus, claims by German Mol representatives that the provisions of the agreements offer protection against the abuse of transferred data for human rights violations are nothing but lip-service. Nonetheless, the Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA) is deploying two liaison officers in Riyadh and Abu Dhabi for several years. [20]

The “sustainable” cooperation between the Federal Police and EADS with Saudi Arabia is the tip of an iceberg representing a much broader engagement of the German security-industrial complex with the Gulf monarchies. The Arab revolutions have demonstrated the myopia of such a stabilisation policy the powerful German national security establishment and the arms and security industry is blind to the fallout of their engagement.

Endnotes

1. Deutscher Bundestag: Drucksache 17/6710, 29.7.11; H. Busch: Von der Ausnahme zur Normalität. Polizei unterwegs im Ausland. In: Bürgerrechte & Polizei/CILIP, Issue 96 (2/2010), pp. 3-14.
2. FAKT reports, 4 April 2011: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tXFgn9jZHBk> and 31 May 2011. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EYSECV5Kc3Q>.
3. Quoted in: EADS gewinnt Riesen-Auftrag in Saudi-Arabien. In: Handelsblatt, 1.7.09.
4. Deutscher Bundestag: Drucksache 17/6102, 8.6.11, p. 4.

5. Bundesministerium des Innern: Deutschland und Saudi Arabien vereinbaren engere Zusammenarbeit im Sicherheitsbereich. Press release, 28.5.09.
6. EADS: EADS wins national security program for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Press release, 30.6.09.
7. <http://www.ict.org.il/biographies/drmarkushellenthal/tabid/183/default.aspx>
8. Deutscher Bundestag: Drucksache 17/6102, 8.6.11; Drucksache 17/6863, 26.8.11.
9. Deutscher Bundestag: Drucksache 16/10252, 19.9.08, p. 21; Drucksache 16/12968, 11.5.09, p.13; Drucksache 16/13897, 14.8.09, p. 13; Drucksache 17/84, 27.11.09, p. 10; Drucksache 17/2265, 22.6.10; Drucksache 17/2845, 3.9.10; Drucksache 17/3931, 25.11.10, p. 14.
10. Bundestagsinnenausschuss: Minutes of the 37th session, 6.4.11.
11. Deutscher Bundestag: Drucksache 17/6102, 8.6.11.
12. Deutschland will Saudi-Arabien Kampfpanzer liefern. In: Spiegel Online, 2.7.11.
<http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/0,1518,771989,00.html>. Saudis schwören auf deutsche Sturmgewehre. In: Spiegel Online, 13.8.11.
<http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/0,1518,779924,00.html>
13. Own calculation on the basis of figures from the Federal Government reports on arms exports 2000, 2005 and 2010. Deutscher Bundestag: Drucksache 14/77657, 23.11.01, pp. 49-79; Drucksache 16/3730, 4.10.06, pp. 76-122; Drucksache 17/4200, 16.12.10, pp. 81-128.
14. Though EADS is a multinational European corporation registered in the Netherlands 44,000 EADS employees work in Germany and the Cassidian Division has more sites in Germany than in any other European country.
15. Available are the ratified agreement with UAE (Deutscher Bundestag: Drucksache 16/9039, 5.5.08) and the initialed agreement with Saudi Arabia notified to the Parliament's Committee of Interior. Innenausschuss: Ausschussdrucksache 16(4)660, 12.8.09.
16. Information drawn from answers by the Federal Government on parliamentary requests for foreign police missions. For numbers of documents see footnote 9:
17. E. Töpfer: Weltpolizist BKA. Von Interpol Wiesbaden zur Vorverlagerung nach Berlin, In: Bürgerrechte & Polizei/CILIP, Issue 96 (2/2010), pp. 15-24 (22).
18. In January 2011 a high-ranking official of the Ministry of Economics and Technology visited the UAE for talks on cooperation in the field of security technology on occasion of the opening of the trade fair INTERSEC. Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Technologie: Parlamentarischer Staatssekretär Otto besucht Vereinigte Arabische Emirate, Press Release, 20.1.2011. Nahost: Überwachung Made in Germany. 8.3.11. <http://fm4.orf.at/stories/1678054/>. See also the website of the international conference on "lawful interception" ISS World Middle East and Africa being held in Dubai on 21-23 February 2011. http://www.issworldtraining.com/ISS_MEA/.
19. Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Technologie: Zukunftsmarkt Zivile Sicherheit. Industriepolitische Konzeption.
<http://www.bmwi.de/BMWi/Redaktion/PDF/XYZ/zukunftsmarktzivile-sicherheit,property=pdf,bereich=bmwi,sprache=de,rwb=true.pdf>
20. Deutscher Bundestag: Drucksache 17/6710, 29.7.11, pp. 8-9.

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