

Why is Germany tolerating Russian chemical weapons facilities on its soil?

Why is Germany tolerating the presence on its soil of elements of Vladimir Putin's chemical weapons program?

The question arises in light of new sanctions introduced against Russia on Tuesday, in response to its August 2020 chemical weapons attack on opposition leader Alexei Navalny. Those sanctioned include three German companies, now added to the U.S. government's so-called "Entity List." Those on the "Entity List" face increased restrictions or even bans from U.S. exports. The newly proscribed German companies, Chimconnect, Pharmcontract, and RIOL-Chemie, were cited for their support of Russia's chemical weapons program.

Yes, you read that right, chemical weapons. This is much more than a standard fare Kremlin money laundering racket.

Putin's covert chemical weapons program is supervised by the Russian GRU intelligence service. As I understand it, the sanctioned German companies are primarily involved in providing precursor materials and technical support to GRU supervised weapons manufacturing facilities in Russia.

Chancellor Angela Merkel should be taking this more seriously. After all, the GRU and its domestic FSB sister intelligence service have carried out at least two nerve agent attacks on innocent people in the last three years; one against Navalny and one against a former British intelligence agent and his daughter. Both attacks involved the use of highly concentrated Novichok nerve agent variants. The British incident led to the death of a completely innocent woman. The Kremlin now finds it amusing to tease that woman's family publicly.

This context makes it utterly absurd that Germany has not closed down the three Russian chemical weapons facilitators. It's not as if these companies are operating in the shadows. Established in a nice north-to-south line across Germany, they publicly advertise their offices and operations.

Chimconnect is located in the city of Konstanz, right next to the Swiss border. Its shoddy website evinces the GRU's disdain for website development as an important element of deniable cover for covert programs. These GRU agents share a building with a language training company, a restaurant, and a weather forecasting service.

Pharmcontract is based openly in the central German business center of Frankfurt.

RIOL-Chemie is located in the village of Lilienthal, right next to the northern city of Bremen. German government records show that RIOL-Chemie's chief executives are Dr. Igor Rozhenko and Sergiy Venger. One "Sergiy Venger" based in Bremen is also listed on the German "best companies" website as "advising third parties on logistics and customs clearance." This would seem a useful skill for those attempting to smuggle chemical weapons or their predicate materials across national borders. The Dun and Bradstreet corporate analysis firm reports that in 2018, RIOL-Chemie's had 12 employees and \$2.5 million USD sales. GRU business is good.

I return to the central question: What on Earth is Merkel's government doing in allowing these companies to operate so freely?

It's not as if Germany has qualms about countering identified threats. The German federal government has even singled out the right-wing AfD party as an extremist organization, meaning the BfV domestic intelligence service can conduct coordinated surveillance of the AfD's membership, records, and activity. AfD has 89 elected members in the Bundestag parliament!

So is it too much to shut down the GRU, a hyper aggressive organization with no qualms about murdering innocent people, hell-bent upon defeating NATO interests? Merkel's sheltering of such interests is astonishing.

In response to the new sanctions, the Kremlin is already threatening to escalate. Putin will only be deterred by the practice of intelligent strength. What Merkel is allowing is the antithesis of such strength. In fact, it is an incarnation of extraordinary moral and strategic weakness. Perhaps it's time for the Western media to reconsider their narrative of Merkel, savior of the Western universe narrative?

It's certainly time for Biden to sanction-to-death the Nord Stream II energy pipeline.

Source:

<https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/opinion/why-is-germany-tolerating-russian-chemical-weapons-facilities-on-its-soil>

[Disclaimer]