

Amazon fires German security firm amid probe

February 18 2013, by Frank Jordans

(AP)—Online retailer Amazon reacted to mounting criticism Monday by firing a security company named in a German television documentary about alleged mistreatment of foreign temporary workers.

An [Amazon](#) spokeswoman in Germany said the company had ended its relationship with Hensel European Security Services "with immediate effect."

"Amazon has a zero tolerance limit for discrimination and intimidation and expects the same of other companies we work with," spokeswoman Ulrike Stoecker said in an email to The Associated Press.

A documentary shown on German public television channel ARD last week showed staff of the security company—whose initials spell out the surname of Adolf Hitler's deputy Rudolf Hess—wearing clothes linked to Germany's neo-Nazi scene. It also interviewed people claiming they were intimidated by the [security](#) guards, who were stationed at a holiday camp where the temporary staff were housed.

The company, hired by one of Amazon's subcontractors, last week denied it supported far-right opinions. "We employ Christians, Muslims and Buddhists," the company said in a statement Friday. "The allegations of far-right sympathies can't be reconciled with that."

The ARD documentary alleged a broader climate of intimidation at Amazon's seven logistics centers in Germany, including threats of

random staff searches, constant pressure to perform better and firing of workers who complained.

The ARD report echoes allegations by German union ver.di, which says Amazon's temporary workers face particular difficulties because many have been brought in from other European countries and don't understand that they are protected by Germany's stringent labor laws.

The [German government](#) said the Federal Labor Agency is investigating an Amazon subcontractor, which it didn't name, in the wake of the documentary.

"We expect the results of the special investigation during the course of the week," Labor Ministry spokeswoman Christina Wendt told reporters Monday.

"There is the option, if mistreatment actually took place, of removing (the subcontractor's) license," she added.

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