

EU, Merkel to raise NSA program with US officials

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This undated photo made available by Google shows failed drives that are destroyed at a data center in St. Ghislain, Belgium. Google says it destroys malfunctioning storage drives on site to protect user data. (AP Photo/Google, Connie Zhou)

Senior European Union officials will question their American counterparts about previously undisclosed U.S. surveillance programs during a trans-Atlantic ministerial meeting in Dublin starting Thursday.

German Chancellor [Angela Merkel](#) will also raise the issue with President [Barack Obama](#) when he visits Berlin next week.

The European Commission said Monday it was concerned about the impact of such programs on the privacy of EU citizens and said overall problems involving data privacy had already been raised by EU Justice Commissioner Viviane Reding during talks with her U.S. counterparts in April.

"This case shows that a clear [legal framework](#) for the protection of personal data is not a luxury or constraint, but a fundamental right," Reding said in a reaction to the case.

The 27-nation EU and the U.S. have long been in talks about data protection as part of negotiations on judicial and police cooperation.

Any issue touching on national security is dealt with separately by each of the EU's member states, but data protection is negotiated by the bloc as a whole.

Germany's Interior Ministry says it is in contact with American authorities to try to clarify details, and determine whether there was any infringement of German citizens' rights, after reports emerged last week of a phone records collection program and Internet-scouring program used by U.S. intelligence. The top U.S. intelligence official has declassified some details.

Obama is due in Berlin on June 18 for his first visit to the German capital as president. Merkel spokesman Steffen Seibert told reporters Monday: "You can safely assume that this is an issue that the chancellor will bring up."

Germans are traditionally sensitive to data [privacy issues](#).

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