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Press release | 11.01.2015

Security and counter-terrorism

EU governments playing into terrorists hands with 'big brother' demands

European home affairs ministers are today meeting in Paris to discuss coordinated counter-terrorism measures in the wake of the terrorist attacks in France this week. Commenting on the meeting, Green justice and home affairs spokesperson **Jan Philipp Albrecht** said:

"EU home affairs ministers are playing into terrorists' hands by demanding 'big brother' measures entailing blanket data retention without justification. This approach is a distraction from the actual measures needed to deal with security and terrorist threats and provides a false sense of security for citizens, at the expense of their civil liberties.

"Mass storage of flight and passenger data is clearly at odds with EU law, as the European Court has made clear (1). At the same time, far-reaching data collection in France would not have prevented the odious attacks in Paris this week. As with previous attacks, the perpetrators of the Paris attacks were already known to security authorities and had been the subject of investigations and supervision measures. Instead of creating an ineffective dragnet on all air passengers, security authorities should have been exchanging the data they already had on these suspects.

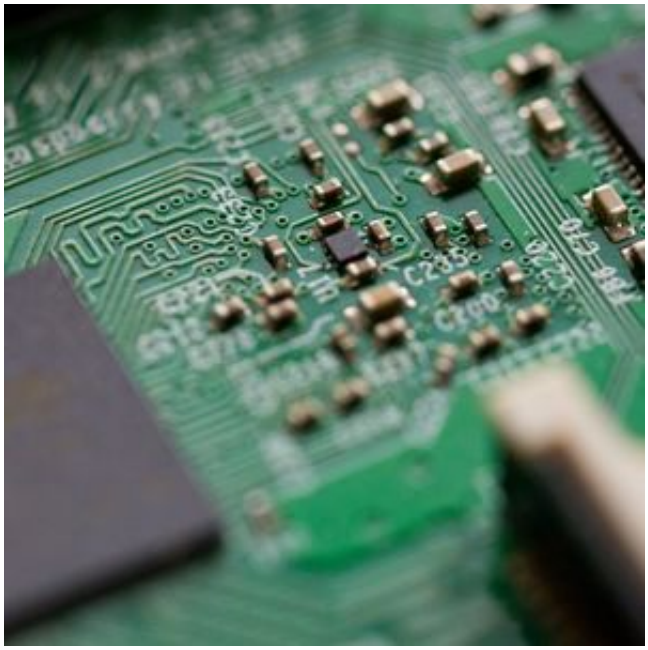
"The European Commission should withdraw its proposal for a European air passenger data retention scheme (2) and instead come forward with proposals and an action plan for better cooperation between police and security authorities in Europe. This would require significant funding but it would be money far better spent than on a resource-heavy and ineffective EU air passenger data retention scheme."

(1) In April 2014, the European Court of Justice ruled that the mass storage of private data, without grounds and without any time limit, is at odds with EU's charter of fundamental rights.
(2) The European Commission proposed legislation in 2011 to create an EU air passenger name record (PNR) system, involving the retention and analysis of all flight data. This proposal has so far failed to secure the support of a majority in the European Parliament and has been on hold since spring 2013. The new EU home affairs commissioner has indicated that the proposal needs to be reviewed in light of the ECJ data retention ruling, which casts clear doubt on the legality of the proposed PNR system.

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Jan Philipp Albrecht

Member

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