

Germany to reform intelligence service

by UPI

BERLIN -- A series of scandals is prompting a major overhaul of Germany's foreign intelligence service with Berlin gaining more control over the agency. Reform of the Bundesnachrichtendienst, or BND, which has some 6,000 employees, is scheduled for completion in 2009 just in time for Germany's next parliamentary elections, Deutsche Welle reported Monday. "The service will undergo a thorough reform process," BND spokesman Stefan Borchert says. "Antiquated and crusty structures will be broken up." Part of the agency was recently involved in spying on journalists in Germany and in questionable actions in Afghanistan. But Borchert said reform had been planned for a long time. According to Borchert, the wall between agents who collect information and those who analyze it will be broken down, ensuring greater transparency. Moving BND headquarters from the town of Pullach to Berlin is among the changes scheduled to take place. Announcement of the reforms has met with approval from opposition politicians. "The federal government has recognized that it has to keep the BND on a shorter leash," says Max Stadler of the Free Democratic Party.

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