

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/bulgaria-prime-minister-s-dangerous-cold-07-02-2013,44043.html>

Europe/Ex-USSR - Bulgaria

"Buddha" gets tough Prime Minister's dangerous Cold War-style threat to journalists

7 February 2013

"What they have done, I can cook it for all of you standing here today. I can order the secret services to launch similar cases for all of you journalists, all of you without exception." ([See Novonite.com](#))

This was how Prime Minister Boyko Borisov reacted at an informal press conference yesterday to the [Bivol.bg](#) website's publication on 3 February of leaked files about his business activities in the 1990s.

According to *Bivol* (WikiLeaks' partner in the Balkans), the police anti-crime department used Borisov as a paid informant with the code name of "Agent Buddha" as he ran a privately-owned security company and had good organized crime contacts, but later decided he was too involved with these contacts. See this [Figaro.fr](#) article in French

"We are stunned, dismayed and outraged by the prime minister's irresponsible comments, which constitute serious and direct threats to all news providers," Reporters Without Borders said. "We thought that 'secret service investigations' of journalists and media were a thing of the past, the Cold War era.

"Borisov is a European leader. Under no circumstances can he support the use of intelligence services to compile files on journalists or tap their phones. He lived through the era of Soviet censorship and control and must realize that his comments have sent a disastrous signal to all the media, which are rightly wondering what conclusions should be drawn from them.

"If this was a case of 'immoderate language,' he must publicly retract his comments and recognize the gravity of this lapse. If it was not a lapse, the European Union's institutions will have to consider whether his comments are compatible with his position as one of the EU's 27 most senior representatives.

"When appointed prime minister, Borisov gave several undertakings to abolish such practices, which have been undermining the Bulgarian media for years. He said media freedom was one of his priorities and promised major reforms, but little has been realized.

"His behaviour will have disastrous consequences not only in Bulgaria but throughout the Balkans. Many will see it as official support for questionable practices of an often criminal nature. How we insist on flawless behaviour from Balkan candidates for EU membership when their closest EU neighbour is pushing them towards the opposite excesses?

"We have greater need than ever for exemplary behaviour within the European Union. Bulgaria was ranked 87th in the [2013 Reporters Without Borders press freedom index](#), the lowest position of any EU member country. Borisov has unfortunately confirmed our fears and is directly helping to maintain an uncertain and dangerous environment for journalists."
