

Germany: politicians urge army's deployment for World Cup

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Prominent politicians from the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and Christian Social Union (CSU) are urging deployment of the German army during the World Cup finals being held this summer in Germany. To achieve this aim, they are demanding that the German constitution be amended to remove stipulations that restrict the use of the military for domestic security.

Interior Minister Wolfgang Schäuble (CDU), who for many years has sought to legalize the deployment of the army inside Germany, has seized the opportunity of the world soccer championship for a new offensive. Last month, he argued that “under unusual circumstances” the German army should be employed to back up the police.

His position was echoed in remarks made by his Bavarian colleague, Günter Beckstein (CSU), who went so far as to warn that the World Cup would be endangered if the German army was not able to intervene. He intimated that such an intervention may be necessary in connection with a heightened “threat of terror”—but was unable to provide any evidence of such a threat.

Both Schäuble and Beckstein insisted that they did not want to place tanks *inside* sports stadiums but, in the words of the CSU expert for domestic affairs Stephan Mayer, there should be no “mind gag” over what might be done. Other conservative politicians have suggested that soldiers should be given the job of “protecting property,” for example, airports and the external borders of Germany. Schäuble had originally expressed his wish that the German army also guard football stadiums and team accommodations.

Germany's police trade union rejected the suggestions, arguing that soldiers are not trained for police tasks. Defense Secretary Franz Josef Jung

(CDU) expressed himself in similar fashion. At the same time, however, Jung supported the proposal that lies at the heart of the debate; i.e., changing the German constitution to allow the domestic deployment of German troops.

Jung proposed waiting for a decision due this spring by the Federal Constitutional Court on the issue of air security legislation and then changing the constitution accordingly. “We have agreed in coalition negotiations [with the Social Democratic Party, SPD] that we will then see where legal changes are necessary, also perhaps constitutional clarifications.” There is already agreement on the use of the German armed forces in disasters—something which is practiced during natural catastrophes.

Bavarian Interior Minister Beckstein voiced confidence that the SPD would agree to a change in Germany's constitution and indicated that there is already “relatively substantial agreement.” Beckstein told the *Stuttgarter Zeitung* that there had already been a “nod towards an agreement” by the SPD that the army should be used for every “disturbance that has the character of a disaster.” It was his impression that the SPD was also willing to negotiate over the issue of the army's deployment in the face of a “threatened security disaster.”

Some SPD politicians declared their outrage at the suggestions made by Schäuble and Beckstein. That such indignation is not to be taken seriously, however, was made clear by an interview given to *Die Welt* by the social-democratic chairman of the parliamentary interior committee, Sebastian Edathy.

Edathy accuses the conservative union parties of seeking a “militarization of internal security” and expressed his uncompromising opposition to the domestic deployment of the German army. At the end

of the interview, however, he expressed his support for changing the constitution to allow the army to take over the tasks of the police when it is required for “preventing a particularly serious accident.” This is in fact the same line of argument used by Schäuble and Beckstein, who declare that, in the case of large gatherings or particularly important buildings, there is an extra danger of disasters or severe accidents arising from terrorist attacks, which can only be combated by mobilizing military forces.

Following widespread public criticism of Schäuble’s proposals, a new initiative is being launched over the use of AWACS (Airborne Warning and Control System) reconnaissance planes. The radar system inside the Boeing jet, which flies at a height of 9 km, carries out surveillance of all movements on the ground and in the surrounding air space, sending its data directly to ground-based operations centers.

Schäuble has made a formal request to the Ministry of Defense for the deployment of such aircraft, which are under NATO command. The SPD and the Greens have already indicated their support for the use of such planes during the football championship. “This is self evident. With AWACS aircraft, the German army can supervise airspace and provide logistical aid,” explained the SPD speaker on domestic affairs, Dieter Wiefelspütz.

Schäuble evidently has learned from his experiences in the 1990s. At that time, the international deployment of the German army was just as controversial as its domestic deployment today. Then, the Green Party and some layers in the SPD had their doubts. The breakthrough came with the use of German military in AWACS flights over the Adriatic Sea, supervising the UN blockade of Serbia and Montenegro. It was argued, that this “merely” involved the deployment of a few personnel for the purpose of air surveillance. However, when the SPD and the Greens signaled their agreement to this operation, the first and most significant barrier had been breached, and within a short period the German army developed an international military presence. Today German troops are active in Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan and many other parts of the world.

In similar fashion, the deployment of German troops at the World Cup, so fervently urged by ruling circles, is aimed at systematically accustoming the German

public to the sight of soldiers being used against civilians in a domestic context.



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