

German army to deploy 2,000 troops for World Cup

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German Interior Minister Wolfgang Schäuble (Christian Democratic Union, CDU) intends to use the World Cup soccer championship to be held this summer in Germany as a means of facilitating the domestic deployment of the army. According to the German constitution, drawn up at the end of the Second World War and drawing on the experiences of fascism, the army is currently not permitted to intervene inside Germany itself.

Following Schäuble's repeated public demands in recent weeks for the use of the German army during the World Cup matches, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, citing a report from the Ministry of Defense, reported Thursday that planning for such a deployment is already well advanced.

According to the report, at least 2,000 German troops are to be used during the World Cup this summer. Federal and state authorities had filed more than 100 applications for the army's support, all of which the Ministry of Defense approved on January 9.

Planned amongst other things are: the use of NBC (nuclear-biological-chemical) detection units at all soccer arenas; the establishment of a emergency-surgical center at the arena in Kaiserslautern; the setting up of a mobile control tower at Stuttgart airport; and the use of CH-53 helicopters for the transport of injured persons. In addition, the German army will provide accommodations for more than 5,900 task force personnel in a total of 40 buildings and provide 150,000 meals for police officers.

The monitoring of German air space, meanwhile, will be undertaken by AWACS radar planes provided by NATO. According to the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, German Defense Secretary Franz Josef Jung (CDU) had already spoken with NATO about the deployment of these planes.

Süddeutsche Zeitung related that the The Defense Ministry report insists that the planned deployment would not violate the German constitution because it deals with "technical legal assistance." The document argues that the German army had already been employed on this basis—to a far lesser extent, however—in earlier emergencies such as the Oder flood disaster a few years ago. The troops would not be acting "as an organ of executive power capable of using force against a third party," the report maintains, and therefore their deployment represents no constitutional breach.

But the argument here is completely duplicitous. The campaign launched by Schäuble and Jung recalls the way public resistance to international deployment of the German army was broken in the 1990s—although at the time this also violated the German constitution.

Then, too, it was maintained that the matter was merely one of "technical aid"—such as the deployment of minesweepers in the Persian Gulf, medical troops to Cambodia, "humanitarian assistance" in Somalia and later the stationing of NBC detection vehicles in Kuwait. In 1994, the Federal Constitutional Court reinterpreted the regulations of the constitution and, for the first time since the war, the German parliament (Bundestag) gave the green light for a combat mission in the summer of 1995: the participation of German combat aircraft in the war against Yugoslavia.

In the meantime, approval for such deployments or their extension has become routine, hardly worth a proper debate in the Bundestag. The German army is now active in a series of interventions spreading from Afghanistan to the Horn of Africa.

In similar fashion, the ground is now being prepared for German army interventions within the borders of Germany itself. There have been numerous attempts to

introduce such a policy going back to the 1960s, when CDU deputies demanded the use of troops against demonstrators and strikers. At the time, Emergency Laws were passed and the constitution supplemented in 1968 by appropriate regulations.

Article 87a permits the use of the armed forces for the protection of civil buildings, for tasks related to traffic regulation and to support police measures, strictly limiting this, however, to defense against invasion and a domestic emergency situation. None of these criteria apply by any means to the World Cup—even on the basis of the most generous interpretation.

Article 87a also allows the use of the armed forces “in the fight against organized and militarily armed rebellions,” or if it concerns combating “a threat to the maintenance of the free democratic constitutional structure of the federation or a state,” and the regular police and Federal Border Police are unable to deal with the threat themselves.

Since then, there have been repeated attempts to expand the conditions for the domestic deployment of the German army on a domestic basis, and Wolfgang Schäuble has played a key role in such efforts.

In 1985, when he was interior minister, Schäuble sought to mobilize the army to defend a world economic summit in the city of Bonn against possible threats from the air. During the later debate over foreign deployment of the German army, Schäuble again agitated for the army’s use for internal purposes. In 1994, he stated in the magazine *Der Spiegel*: “The borders between domestic and external security can no longer be defined so clearly. Therefore it must be possible to fall back on the German army as a kind of security reserve.”

The debate flared up again after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. CDU Chairman Angela Merkel, who has since been promoted to the post of chancellor, demanded at the time a “National Security Office”; i.e., a German version of the American Department of Homeland Security, in which the German army should play a role alongside the police and secret services.

At the time, the magazine *CILIP* made its own assessment of the decades-long debate over the domestic role of the German army as follows: “Despite different world situations the arguments of the CDU/CSU for domestic deployment of the German

army have remained the same for 10 years. On a cyclical basis they are wheeled out at any opportunity. Neither the material threat plays a role, nor the question about the actual abilities of the German army to be able to operate internally” (Stefan Gose, “Domestic use of the German Armed Forces”, Citizen Rights and Police/CILIP 70 (3/2001))

The World Cup provides the latest opportunity for Schäuble to break down the barriers against the use of the German army at home. Combating threats of terror is merely a pretence. After all, the provision of meals for the police could be undertaken by a private catering company. Against a background of increasing unemployment and social tension, Schäuble is eager to set a precedent. The use of soldiers on a domestic basis—something which has been a taboo in Germany since the bitter and bloody experiences of the empire, the Weimar Republic and Nazi dictatorship—is once again to become the norm.



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