Germany offers bombs and military technology for war against Libya

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NATO forces have carried out more than 5,000 air strikes since the war against Libya started over one hundred days ago. Now the main combatant nations, France and Great Britain, are running out of ammunition. The German government and Defense Minister Thomas de Maiziere (CDU, Christian Democratic Union) immediately took advantage of this situation to offer German bombs and military technology for the war.

As *Spiegel Online* has reported, the NATO logistics agency NAMSA (NATO Maintenance and Supply Agency) made requests to all NATO member states for "technology and components for bombs and other military technology". The German Defense Minister agreed immediately. NATO has not yet placed an actual order, but with about fifty bombing runs every day, it is only a matter of time before NAMSA takes up the German offer.

Press reports say that Berlin stands ready to deliver "50 bomb bodies" to NAMSA. These are the casings as well as the guidance systems used for modern air-to-surface bombs (*Süddeutsche Zeitung*). A spokesman for the Defense Ministry emphasized that delivery would not include explosive material.

In response to criticism, de Maiziere emphasized that this was a normal procedure and "routine business of the alliance. This is the way partners always act to handle logistic shortages", the minister said. "This is a normal procedure, just like we work together with NATO staff and allow them to use airbases in Germany."

The minister's attempts to downplay the German offer cannot hide the fact that the German government is changing its policy towards Libya step by step. In March, the government abstained from voting in the UN Security Council during the vote for the establishment of a no-flight area over Libya. In the course of the past few weeks, however, Berlin has made it increasingly clear that it is changing its position. Just three weeks ago, de Maiziere suggested that German troops could be deployed once Gaddafi was overthrown.

Business groups in particular point out that Libya is a very rich country and Germany should not stand aside when it comes to reconstruction projects. German corporations are looking forward to extremely profitable business opportunities. In addition, the US is exerting political pressure on Germany, making it clear at every opportunity that it expects closer cooperation from its traditional ally.

Furthermore, the SPD and Greens are exerting increasing political pressure on the domestic front. Those two biggest opposition parties and factions of the governing parties, have fiercely criticized the government's abstention in the Security Council.

The opposition's critique of the minister's latest decision is completely hypocritical. SPD defense expert Rainer Arnold accused de Maiziere of dishonesty while Green Party deputy Omid Nouripour even called him a liar. The criticisms appear harsh, but in fact they are directed solely against the defense minister's information policy, not against the delivery of bombs.

"On one hand, they refuse to participate in the NATO mission, but then deliver weapons by the backdoor", Arnold laments.

Nouripour said: "The Foreign Minister advocates abstention while the Defense Minister promises to deliver bombs for the war". Both men criticize the government's duplicity which seeks to downplay its level of participation in the conflict for public consumption, while being continually reminded by NATO of its obligations as an alliance member.

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For their part the SPD and Greens try to take advantage of this situation. They want to take over the government to ensure that German interests are secured globally. The Greens in particular accused the government of having “turned tail” (Joschka Fischer) after their abstention in the UN Security Council. Nouripour called the government’s actions “a shame”. Both parties advocate the bombing of Libya under the cover of “humanitarian reasons”.

The criticism of the Left Party, more specifically by its leader Gregor Gysi, also lacks any credibility. Gysi has declared that Germany has entered the “coalition of belligerents”. If the party’s former chairman and EU deputy Lothar Bisky had his way, Germany would have joined the bombing campaign at the start. In March, Bisky supported a resolution to demand a no-flight zone over Libya in the European Parliament.

As a result, German weapons will soon bring death and destruction to Libya. In the past three and a half months, NATO attacks on Tripoli have already caused the deaths of 400 civilians and injuries of 1,400.

The German government’s record with regard to previous “logistical shortages” on the part of its allies also remains murky. Requests within NATO do not have to pass through parliaments or the appropriate parliamentary committees. All that is needed is the defense minister’s decision—and it is he who decides whether requests and deliveries are made public or not. Following an enquiry the ministry revealed that it had authorized the delivery of 900 tracer rounds to a NATO partner in May.

In the wake of the latest German offer to assist NATO in the Libya war it has also come to light that the German government authorized the dispatch of 200 Leopold tanks to Saudi Arabia, which is currently involved in its own violent suppression of domestic opposition.

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