

German army conducts biggest military exercises since Cold War

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Since last Monday, the German army has been conducting its largest military exercises since the 1980s. The entire orientation of the exercise makes clear that, amid the escalating tensions with Russia due to the crisis in Ukraine, the German army and its Western allies are once again preparing for a major war with Russia.

The operation, named “Jawtex” (Joint Air Warfare Tactical Exercise), has been planned for three years. Around 4,500 soldiers are involved from a total of 12 countries, including Germany, France, the US, Italy, Slovenia, Greece, Turkey, the Netherlands, and the non-NATO states Austria, Switzerland and Finland.

According to German army sources, it is not officially a NATO operation. However, other countries are involved—leaving no doubt that the cooperation is to be expanded and deepened within NATO, under the leadership of the German army. Finland’s involvement was particularly significant, since it is a state that is a non-NATO member with a 1,300-kilometre (808-mile) border with Russia.

Through the end of this week, practically the entire spectrum of tasks for “air combat forces” will be tested, according to the German army. The exercise is not confined to the air force, however. Jawtex was a “joined combined exercise,” involving the entire German army, Chief Lieutenant Gero Finke told Deutschlandfunk. The “collaboration between the air force, army and navy” is also to be tested.

According to German army sources, they will practice “overlapping combat scenarios between the air force, navy and ground units.” Another aim is to practice “comprehensive armed forces firing support.”

The sheer scale of the exercise confirms that the German army and its Western allies are already preparing for an open and major war, rather than the so-

called special forces interventions in distant crisis regions of recent years.

Jawtex is “practically being conducted across Germany’s entire northern and northeastern territory,” the German army reported on its web site. Close to 100 planes and helicopters are involved, with around 150 takeoffs and landings daily. The exercise is being led by Brigadier General Burkhard Pototzky from the Holzdorf air base in Brandenburg.

It is not only the extent of the exercise that proves the German army is readying itself for war, however. The individual operations make clear the type of plans that are being pursued. An air landing operation with 900 soldiers is to be tested involving units of paratroopers, army aviation, and artillery.

The German army wrote on its web site about a long-range reconnaissance company that is participating: “Their task is the exposure of the enemy in the operating zone deep in enemy territory. They cannot make any mistake in the process. Once they are identified by the enemy, their mission is condemned to failure.”

In air space over northern Germany, the air force is taking over several flight corridors for days. Part of the exercise includes plans for flying at low altitudes of 70 metres (230 feet).

In Jagel, Schleswig-Holstein, the air force is practicing bombing missions. “For two weeks, pilots have to try to navigate through a cordon of radars and ground-to-air defence,” the NDR radio network wrote. Colonel Hans-Jürgen Knittlmeier commented, “It is practicing how to sneak in, how the opposing air defences can be overcome without suffering any losses.”

Such statements make the purpose of the Jawtex exercise clear. It is part of the transformation of

German foreign policy, which is turning east again for a third time following two world wars in the previous century. Following the organisation of a coup in Ukraine by Germany, the US and its allies, preparations are underway for a military confrontation with Russia.

An interview with former German chancellor Helmut Schmidt in Friday's edition of the *Bild* newspaper reflects the seriousness of the political crisis.

The 95-year-old warned that, as in 1914, Europe was standing on the edge of the abyss. "The situation seems to me to be increasingly comparable." Though Schmidt said he did not want "to speak too soon about a third world war," he said that "the danger that the situation could escalate as in August 1914 is growing daily."



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