

European governments prepare for military suppression of popular opposition

Denis Krassnin
10 July 2014

European governments are working together to prepare to militarily suppress social unrest. This effort—involving legal, technical, as well as military plans—is in an advanced stage of development, according to a report by Aureliana Sorrento that aired on June 20 on Germany's Deutschlandfunk radio station. "In the framework of collaborative foreign and security policy," the introduction on Deutschlandfunk's web site reads, "military and police responsibility are increasingly blurred and the capacity to combat social uprisings is being built up." Officially, this concerns campaigns in countries outside the European Union, the web site notes, "but with Article 222 of the Lisbon Treaty, the legal conditions for the deployment of military and paramilitary units in the EU [European Union] crisis states were satisfied."

Only four days after this program was broadcast, the European General Affairs Council adopted provisions for Article 222, which is also called the "solidarity clause." It said that the European Union would "mobilise all the instruments at its disposal, including the military resources made available by the Member States," if "a member state is affected by a terrorist attack, or a natural or man-made disaster." The decision allows for the deployment of Special Forces, paramilitary groups and various other "anti-terror" groups.

A disaster is defined as "any situation that has harmful repercussions on human beings, the environment or wealth assets," according to an accompanying paper by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton. Strikes, demonstrations or uprisings endangering critical infrastructure, banks and corporations can also be included among the targets of military actions carried out by the European police and military.

Preparations for such operations are well advanced. Since the violent confrontations at the G8 Summit in Genoa in the summer of 2001 and the terror attacks in the US on September 11 of the same year, EU member states have systematically consolidated paramilitary forces suited to internal operations.

In 2001, 150,000 demonstrators from all over the world traveled to the G8 Summit in Genoa. A large squad of state security forces protected the heads of state or government of the leading industrial countries. Masked police provocateurs caused violent collisions, and security forces brutally confronted the demonstrators. One youth, 23-year-old Carlo Giuliani, was shot, over 500 people were injured and over 300 arrested. Property damage amounted to €40 million.

After the September 11 terror attacks, the EU-funded ATLAS Network of special police forces was founded. Today, all 37 elite units are hosted by the EU, including the German GSG 9. The network coordinates common training and exercises.

The "Center of Excellence for Stability Police Units," a training center for police units "especially trained in the handling of violent uprisings," as political scientist Christian Kreuder-Sonnen explained, has been located in the northern Italian city of Vicenza since 2005. European, American and African policemen are prepared here for deployments in war areas. The centre is mainly financed by the United States.

The European Gendarmerie Force (EGF), founded in 2006, also has its headquarters in Vicenza. Eight European states are represented in the EGF, and Turkey has observer status. The conditions of deployment of the EGF are extremely flexible: it can be placed under the command of the EU, the UN, NATO, or the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). It has been deployed to Bosnia and

Herzegovina, Afghanistan and Haiti.

In 2008, the French Gendarmerie started a project together with the European Commission, in which police and members of the Gendarmerie from different EU countries trained together. Two years later, an exercise took place under the leadership of the German Federal Police in the armed forces barracks near Potsdam.

Since the financial crisis of 2008, the growth of the European security apparatus has accelerated. According to the British civil rights organization Statewatch, the budget of the ATLAS Network recently increased five-fold.

The purpose of the network is not simply to carry out practice drills. Military and security forces will now be used against demonstrations and strikes, as they were against strikers in Greece and Spain. In March of this year, the anti-uprising units fired tear gas and rubber bullets on participants in a demonstration in Madrid of over a million people.

These preparations for mass repression are consciously viewed as a defense of the interests of the capitalist elite against mass uprisings of working class and poor people.

In the study entitled “Urban violence and humanitarian challenges”, the European Union Institute for Security Studies points to the “deep-seated inequalities in the distribution of economic, political and social resources which themselves are interrelated with poverty and are underpinned by globalisation and neo-liberal macro-economic and political processes.”

The “Perspectives for European Defense 2020”, by the same institute, see the task of future military deployments among other things in the “protection of the rich of this world from the tensions and problems of the impoverished ... As the proportion of the world population that is impoverished and frustrated continues to increase, the tensions between this world and the world of the rich will increase—with corresponding consequences,” the statement predicts.

It adds, “Technology contracts the world into a small town that is on the verge of a revolution. While we have to deal with an increasingly integrated upper stratum, we are at the same time confronted with the growth of explosive tensions in the poorest lower stratum.”

For this purpose, soldiers are to receive realistic

training in suppressing popular uprisings. The German armed forces are building a city named Schnöggersburg, an “urban conurbation” with 520 buildings on a plot of land north of Magdeburg, belonging to the Combat Training Center’s army. It includes a slum, an industrial area and a mosque, which can be turned into a church. After completion, EU and NATO combat units will practice waging war in the city.

In Germany, deployments of the armed forces against uprisings and social unrest have been subject to legal regulation for a long time. The emergency laws, passed in 1968 by the Grand Coalition, allow the deployment of armed forces “for protection against imminent dangers to free democratic principles.”

In 2007, the German armed forces were deployed to protect the G8 Summit in Heiligendamm. They supported the police in spying on demonstrators, as Tornado fighter jets overflew the protesters.



To contact the WSW and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact