

Germany expands its intervention in Iraq

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Germany has begun to significantly expand its intervention in Iraq. Jens Flosdorff, the spokesman of the department of defense, announced in Berlin that Transall transport planes of the Bundeswehr (German Armed Forces) would bring an additional 100 tons of relief supplies to the region beginning Wednesday. These would mainly include “humanitarian” assistance such as food, medical supplies, and blankets. Last week the Bundeswehr had already transported 36 tons of supplies to Iraq.

Now, for the first time, the Bundeswehr will transport “non-humanitarian” equipment to the country, Flosdorff announced. Under discussion is the export of vehicles, body armor, helmets, night vision devices and booby trap detectors from Bundeswehr stocks. Deliveries are to go directly to Erbil in northern Iraq to support the Kurdish peshmerga in their fight against the Islamist militias of the Islamic State (IS), which in recent weeks have brought vast areas of northern Iraq under their control.

While the US Air Force bombed IS positions from the air, the German government prepared to deliver weapons side by side with relief supplies to the Kurdish militias. On Monday, a spokesman for the federal foreign office declared he had information that “the government’s policy makers will come to an agreement” in the next few days. The spokesman said that according to foreign minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier (SPD), “nothing is ruled out” relating to aid for Iraq. “We will see what is necessary and then we will do everything we can.”

Last weekend a Bundeswehr plane flew Steinmeier for a brief visit in Iraq to express his support for the fight against the IS. In Baghdad he met his Iraqi counterpart, Hussein al-Shahristani, and the nominee for Prime Minister, Haider al-Abadi. In Erbil he held talks with the President of the autonomous region of Kurdistan, Massoud Barzani.

Steinmeier gave no concrete promises during his trip, but had previously announced the transfer of arms. “At this stage,” Steinmeier declared on ZDF, he would “not rule out the delivery of weapons, if necessary, if the threatening situation continues.” Before his departure, he had agreed on a joint declaration with the Foreign Secretaries of the European Union in Brussels, who welcomed the supply of weapons by individual EU member states. France and Britain have already announced they will deliver weapons to the crisis-hit region.

In Berlin, plans to step up its military plans are being rapidly developed. On Monday, Steinmeier first briefed Chancellor Angela Merkel (of the right-wing Christian Democratic Union, CDU) on his trip, and then defense secretary Ursula von der Leyen (CDU). In the afternoon, Steinmeier and von der Leyen proceeded to inform the parliamentary committee on foreign affairs and the parliamentary committee on defense about the situation in Iraq and Syria.

In addition to the Chancellor, the foreign minister, and the defense secretary, other politicians from the government as well as the opposition have expressed their support for the arms delivery last weekend.

Economics Minister Sigmar Gabriel (SPD) told *Der Spiegel*: “We cannot watch fanatics armed from head to toe kill thousands of innocent people and their defenders are left without effective means to protect them.”

In an interview with the *Bild am Sonntag*, Joschka Fischer, the former foreign minister from the Green Party, declared with his typical arrogant and belligerent attitude that a terrorist militia “can neither be” stopped “with prayers nor with banners ... We should rather deliver arms to the Kurds, because we have a duty to help.” Germany should “accompany the brave French, British and Czech initiatives.” In this process, he declared, it would be “secondary” in whose hands the

weapons would end up in the future.

Although such weapons deliveries violate the War Weapons Control Act (CHP), which bans weapons deliveries to war zones, the demand for military aid to the Kurdish militia is rapturously supported in the media. Editorialists and commentators are not only demanding a more aggressive policy by Germany against Russia, but also in the Middle East.

The Sunday edition of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, the FAS, cheered in a review titled “WEAPONS”, that with the Iraq intervention, postwar Germany’s “foreign policy consensus ... was falling apart at breathtaking speed”. That consensus was that Germany “keeps out of wars outside Europe” and “has no place or business there ... at least as long no mutual defense clause is invoked.”

The conservative newspaper noted with satisfaction that “the Left Party had participated in [breaking] the long overdue taboo ... Even before the CDU called for more involvement, Ulla Jelpke, an orthodox pacifist, reflected on the radio about the fact that the ‘barbaric Islamists’ could possibly be only stopped with ‘military type’ actions. Gregor Gysi, head of a parliamentary faction that declares it wants to ban arms exports of any kind, suddenly believed they must be ‘permitted’ to ‘prevent a greater disaster.’”

The FAS linked the consensus on the German weapons deliveries in Iraq to the shift towards an aggressive foreign policy that was announced by President Joachim Gauck, Steinmeier and Von der Leyen earlier this year. “One might think that everything was already prepared with the speeches at the Munich Security Conference earlier this year, since the president had campaigned that Germany had to take ‘more responsibility’ in the global world order, even militarily,” the newspaper says.

If the talk now was about weapons deliveries “explicitly to Iraq ... the country has taken a decisive step forward. It has recognized and accepted its own responsibility; it has detached itself from an equally narrow-minded as convenient interpretation of its security interests. The habitual ‘stay out of wars!’ will henceforth no longer be enough to justify German security policy,” the FAS said.

The review reveals that Germany’s Iraq intervention is not a “humanitarian intervention” to protect Iraq’s minorities. It is directly linked to the revival of German

militarism, and the fact that all the representatives of German imperialism, including the Left Party, are determined not to be a bystander when it comes to the dividing up and plundering a resource-rich and strategically important country.



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