

German government sends arms to Iraq and backs US air strikes in Syria

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On Thursday, the Bundeswehr (Armed Forces) began the first German arms shipments to Iraq. From Leipzig Airport, a Dutch cargo plane departed with 27 tons of munitions. The plane transported 50 bazookas plus ammunition, 520 rifles and 20 machine guns.

Overall, the German government wants to deliver weapons worth around 70 million euros to Iraq in the next few days. This will include 30 “Milan” anti-tank weapons systems with a total of 500 rockets, 16,000 G3 and G36 assault rifles, as well as 10,000 hand grenades. In addition, there will also be 40 machine guns and 4,000 protective vests and helmets, SUVs and five “Dingo 1” armoured patrol vehicles.

A few hours after the start of the arms shipments, Defence Minister Ursula von der Leyen made a surprise visit to Erbil in northern Iraq. In the capital of the Kurdish autonomous region, she met with President Masud Barzani and German soldiers who have been stationed in northern Iraq for several weeks. Together they attended a training facility in which the Bundeswehr will train 10,000 Kurdish Peshmerga for the fight against the Islamic State (IS) militias operating in the northern part of Syria and in Iraq.

The arms shipments and von der Leyen’s visit underscore the fact that, in contrast to the war launched by the United States against Iraq eleven years ago, today the German government stands fully behind the latest US-led Middle East war.

On Wednesday in New York, German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier (Social Democratic Party) supported the air strikes on IS positions in Syria. After the warmongering speech by President Barack Obama at the United Nations, Steinmeier said the IS could only be defeated “when it found no uncontested safe haven in Syria”. German delegation sources said the attacks on Syrian territory were not a “simple

matter”. However, it was likely that the United States was “organizing its actions in line with existing international law”.

In reality, the German government knows that the air strikes against Syria and Iraq constitute another illegal war by the imperialist powers.

The front page lead of the current issue of *Die Zeit* is surprisingly honest: “Considered coldly and soberly, the air strikes are actually difficult to reconcile with international law. They violate the two main ideas of international law, the prohibition of the use of force and the principle of sovereignty. Moreover, when he ordered the attacks against the IS, President Barack Obama acted without Security Council authorization, indeed, he did not even try to get this approval”.

Furthermore, the paper states: “The air attacks against the IS belong in a long series of Western interventions performed with tremendous moral pathos and tenuous legitimacy. Again and again, international law has been stretched, twisted or equally broken”.

Of course, all this is no reason to reject the war for *Die Zeit*, which beats the drums of war every week. Quite the contrary! Cynically, the paper declares: “Yes, the law was ignored, but for a good or at least a proper cause—to stop the triumph of ‘God’s warriors’, or at least to put the brake on them, and hopefully to soon end the human and moral catastrophe of the Syrian civil war”.

This is nothing but lying propaganda. In reality, as in previous Western interventions, what is at stake is not “a good cause” or the “ending of a human and moral disaster”, but imperialist interests. As in the Iraq war in 2003 and the NATO bombing of Libya in 2011, the imperialist powers intend to divide and control the resource-rich and strategically important region.

The rise of the IS, which is now being used as a

pretext for a new Middle East war, is the direct result of past interventions by the Great Powers. These include the destruction of Iraq, Libya and Syria, where since 2011 the imperialist powers and their regional allies have fomented a civil war to topple the Assad regime and install a pro-Western puppet regime. In these campaigns they have long supported and armed the same Islamist forces they are now using as the pretext for direct military intervention.

The developing war in Syria and Iraq also serves the ruling elite as a pretext for a massive upgrading of military capacity internally and externally.

For weeks, the government has warned of “returnees from Syria who are ready to do anything”, and is using its self-created terror threat to beef up the state’s repressive apparatus. At the weekend, according to media reports, a special unit of the Berlin police arrested an alleged “Syria returnee” suspected of supporting the IS. On 12 September, the government had banned the IS.

At the same time, the intelligence agencies are expanding the illegal surveillance of the population. Two weeks ago, it came to light that the Federal Intelligence Service (BND, responsible for foreign intelligence) listening post in the Bavarian town of Bad Aibling was capturing all the traffic flowing to Afghanistan, Somalia and the Middle East, passing much data directly on to the American NSA.

The deliveries of arms to Iraq have been accompanied by an orchestrated propaganda campaign. Daily, the media launch new reports about the allegedly “ailing” and “appalling state” of the Bundeswehr (*Süddeutsche Zeitung*). Everything is lacking, it is claimed. Among other things, there were too few operational tanks, helicopters and combat and transport aircraft. According to *Spiegel Online*, this was why von der Leyen’s trip to Iraq had degenerated into a “breakdown mission”. Due to a defect, the weapons and additional instructors had arrived after their departure in Erbil.

Nikolaus Blome, an editorial board member of *Der Spiegel*, has made clear in a commentary that for the ruling elite the issue is the massive rearmament of the Bundeswehr and an increase in the defence budget. The condition of the Bundeswehr is “bitter, especially for a country that with good reason should discuss its contemporary role in the world—but now experiences that this debate can be spared, as long as the practical

rearmament no longer affects the status quo,” he writes.

If von der Leyen “is more serious about Germany’s role in the world than can be assumed at present, she should at least contest the level of the defence budget,” Blome continues. This was “not half as easy as making keynote speeches—and not half as popular as a comprehensive supply of nursery school places. It still remains necessary. Put your money, where your mouth is, the British say. Let words be followed by deeds, or keep quiet”.



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