

Germany plans to expand its military operations in the Middle East

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The German government intends to massively expand its military engagement in the Middle East, including in both Iraq and Syria.

On Wednesday, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, citing government sources, reported that the foreign and defence ministries are reviewing plans for the German Army to train Kurdish militias fighting the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

The German government already began supplying weapons to Iraq in September. It plans to arm a total of 10,000 Peshmerga fighters with machine guns, rocket-propelled grenades, anti-tank missiles and vehicles. Now a German Army training team is to follow with the task of instructing the militia on how to use the weapons. Currently 13 German troops are stationed there, including six paratroopers.

According to the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, four training centres are to be established in northern Iraq, run by an international coalition led by the United States. The German soldiers would be deployed alongside troops from other countries at a centre in Irbil. This would involve a total of between 200 and 300 soldiers from different countries, with the exact number of German participants yet to be determined. A figure of around 100 was mentioned by military sources on Wednesday.

According to government circles, there will first be a joint exploratory trip by representatives of the ministries involved before a final decision is taken on the mission.

In reality, it is likely that the deployment of additional troops to Iraq has long since been decided. Two weeks ago, Defence Minister Ursula Von der Leyen informed the parliamentary defence committee that Germany intended to expand its engagement in Iraq. Along with the establishment of the training camp in Irbil, German training of the Iraqi army and the sending of officers to

occupy leading positions were also cited as possibilities. The US, which leads the coalition at war in Iraq and Syria is pushing for this behind the scenes.

It is evident that the expansion of the German intervention in Iraq has been planned in close consultation with the US.

On Tuesday and Wednesday, US Secretary of State John Kerry visited Berlin. The main issue in his meeting with Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier and Chancellor Angela Merkel was close transatlantic cooperation, above all in foreign policy. Prior to her meeting with Kerry, Merkel said that the "global community" was faced with "very many tasks, which are also very demanding." It was good "that we act in close partnership and consultation with the United States," she said.

Kerry thanked Germany for its leading role in crises such as the Ukraine conflict and the Ebola epidemic. In close alliance with the US earlier this year, Berlin supported a fascist-led coup in Ukraine to overthrow President Victor Yanukovitch, and it now collaborates closely with the pro-western regime of oligarch Petro Poroshenko. The ebola epidemic is being used by Germany, the US and other powers as a pretext to pursue their imperialist interests in Africa more aggressively. "We are partners in all major challenges," Kerry declared cynically.

At a joint press conference at the Borsig Villa in Berlin, Steinmeier explained the importance of close cooperation between Germany and the United States in the latest war in the Middle East. It was correct that the US and Germany had established an international alliance against ISIS, he said.

Steinmeier made clear that supplying weapons to the Peshmerga would not be the end of Germany's involvement. Further intensive work for a political

solution also had to take place in Syria, he said. In other words, Germany is pursuing the goal, along with the US, of overthrowing the Assad regime in order to bring a pro-western puppet regime to power.

At the end of his remarks, Steinmeier said that there are currently so many conflicts that to many people it may appear that “the world seems to have lost its bearings.”

In fact, it is above all due to the aggressive militarist policy of the western powers that the world has “lost its bearings.” This is shown in Ukraine and above all in the Middle East. The invasion of Iraq in 2003, NATO’s bombardment of Libya in 2011 and the civil war stoked in Syria have cost the lives of hundreds of thousands and destroyed entire countries.

The rise of ISIS, which is now being used as a pretext for another war in the Middle East, with German participation, is a direct result of previous interventions. Over a long period of time, the imperialist powers and their regional allies funded and armed the same Islamist forces they are now using to justify direct military intervention.

Particularly for the German government, which officially did not participate in the Iraq war of 2003 and the NATO war in Libya in 2011, the consequences of these illegal wars are being used to press ahead for the return of German imperialism to the world stage.

In a comment in the most recent edition of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung*, Steinmeier drew the lessons from Afghanistan on behalf of the entire German bourgeoisie. Since the war of aggression in 2001, which violated international law, the country has been under the occupation of western forces and is sinking ever deeper into chaos.

Steinmeier painted a grim picture of the state of Afghanistan. “The narcotics economy continues to flourish. Corruption at all levels is preventing the modernisation of the economy and the state. In many provinces, powerful warlords rule, and in parts of the country, violence still governs. Whoever had hoped for quicker equal treatment for women cannot be satisfied in spite of some progress. And yes, there is still the radical Islamist Taliban.”

The foreign minister concluded, “We have to engage more decisively, we can’t just focus on the military. We have to take a deep breath...a look at the world map warns me against writing off our mission as failed

prematurely. In Libya, several states decided on military attacks to prevent a bloody civil war. But no-one was prepared for on-going engagement. Today, the country threatens to fall into civil war.” In Syria, the international community was also not able to unite behind joint action, he said.

Steinmeier’s “lessons” drawn recall the horrific logic of German imperialism in the First and Second World Wars. The problem is not the imperialist onslaughts, but rather that there is not enough of them and that they are not aggressive enough!

Sections of the German political establishment are also raising the demand for German combat troops in the Middle East. In an interview with the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* at the end of last week, Christian Social Union (CSU) leader Horst Seehofer did not exclude using German ground troops against ISIS. “If the situation changes dramatically, then it needs to be rethought,” he said.

The nominal opposition parties in parliament, the Greens and Left Party, have long been attacking the government from the right, demanding that Germany intervene more aggressively in Iraq and Syria.



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