

German army prepares for civil war

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The second “International Urban Operations Conference” took place in central Berlin between 20 and 22 October. Four hundred delegates from 40 countries, many with dubious democratic traditions, met for three days to discuss the suppression of uprisings and other forms of civil unrest in urban areas.

“In today’s world, urban regions are key areas,” the conference program declared. “Maintaining and creating stability in urban areas is a challenging task for today’s security forces ... Scenarios ranging from the routine assistance or show of force approach to full scale street fighting can change rapidly, sometimes even at a moment’s notice. ... New threats of insurgency, terrorism and guerrilla warfare can only be matched by state-of-the-art intelligence, reconnaissance and surveillance assets.”

The program noted that the goal of the conference was to “present solutions to the above-mentioned challenges. It will offer a platform for the exchange of experience from current missions and will present an overview of the new military concept of the German army concerning urban operations.”

It continues: “Representatives of industry have the chance to present their ideas, concepts and solutions to high ranking NATO and other military representatives.”

The conference was chaired by the head of development for the German army, Major General Erhard Drews. It was jointly organised by the German Association for Defence Technology (DWT), a charitable organisation set up in 1957 at the initiative of the defence ministry and which serves as a lobby for the arms industry.

The conference was financed by the arms industry. The sponsors include the global leader in the production of handheld firearms, Heckler&Koch, the weaponry producers Dynamit Nobel Defence and Kärcher Futurtech, as well as the Israeli arms firm

Rafael. Numerous other arms manufacturers offered their products at exhibition stands.

After an icebreaker reception in the bar of the Hotel Maritim, the participants listened to dozens of lectures over two days on conducting urban warfare.

Major General Drews spoke on the German “Army Perspective on Urban Operations”, Britain’s Brigadier Bob Bruce on “Land Forces in Urban Environment,” Israeli reserve general and Rafael representative Rami Ben Efraim on “Rafael and Urban Challenge,” German parliamentary deputy and President of the reservists’ association Roderich Kiesewetter (Christian Democrats) on the “Political and Strategic Challenges of Urban Operations” and British colonel Mark Kenyon on “Urban Combat—Reports of a Battalion Commander.”

At 12 seminars, there were around 60 further lectures from military representatives, arms lobbyists and scientists. A representative from Heckler&Koch spoke about the “family of handheld firearms systems for infantry in modern urban operations”, and a representative from Securiton about “Mobile surveillance: urban reconnaissance and control.”

The urban operations conference, which took place virtually without media comment, provided a glimpse of the changes currently being implemented as part of the reform of the German army. Since the announcement at the beginning of this year by government representatives that the era of military restraint was over, they have been preparing not only for interventions against external enemies, but also for civil war operations.

An official report on the first conference, which also took place in Berlin in early 2012, confirms this. The report states, “Today’s crisis operations are increasingly marked by interventions and fighting in densely populated areas and partially also in cities. This difficult, and for many NATO countries, new approach

away from classic battlefields towards crisis operations in urban areas is the basis for a fundamental restructuring of their own armed forces. The Bundeswehr also is exactly responding to these changed conditions with its realignment.”

Urban areas do not only refer to the crisis regions in eastern Ukraine or the Middle East. Faced with mounting social tensions the German army is preparing to take action against protests and resistance domestically. The legal basis for this was already put in place with the emergency powers passed in 1968.

The fact that commanders spoke at the Berlin conference with combat experience in Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq and Israel is a warning sign. The military operations against the Taliban, Islamic State and the Palestinians are being studied and serve as templates for how social resistance is to be dealt with at home.



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