

German military to lead NATO rapid response force

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20 November 2014

The German military will lead a NATO rapid response force in Eastern Europe, according to a report in Saturday's *Die Welt*. The conservative newspaper, which is well connected to top NATO circles, writes that the foreign ministers of NATO member states are already planning at their December meeting to establish a temporary elite military unit under German leadership. The unit is to be ready for deployment as early as the beginning of 2015.

The elite force will be formally led by the German-Dutch Corps in Münster, Westphalia. This corps has integrated several thousand of its 40,000 troops into the NATO Response Force (NRF). The corps is under German command and will be headed by Army Lieutenant General Volker Halbauer.

As part of a rotation system, Germany will also lead the NRF's ground combat forces in 2015.

The NRF was founded in 2002 at the initiative of then-US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. It is composed of combat forces that can be deployed for missions with high operational requirements. The NATO conference last September in Wales decided to significantly expand the NRF and add a rapid response spearhead. The rapid response force is to be established in 2016.

The formation of the elite intervention force is part of a systematic military buildup by NATO in Eastern Europe, aimed directly at Russia. "It is a clear sign to our allies in the east and a clear signal to Moscow," according to a senior NATO representative cited by *Die Welt*. The newspaper goes on to comment: "The goal is to massively increase the alliance's response capacity so that it can defend alliance territory against a threat by Moscow within a few days."

This has now become the mantra of the imperialist powers and their media mouthpieces. NATO's war-

mongering foreign policy is portrayed as an emergency measure against the threatening situation produced by Moscow. According to *Die Welt*, the rapid response force was a reaction to the "increasing number of Russian military manoeuvres and the new threats in Eastern Europe and the Baltic due to Russian aggression."

In reality, the aggressors are in Washington, Brussels and Berlin. The European Union (EU) and United States provoked the confrontation with Russia through their organisation of a right-wing coup in Kiev. Now they are using the resulting crisis to integrate Ukraine into their sphere of influence and militarily encircle Russia.

The extent of NATO's plans shows that the alliance is preparing for war with nuclear-armed Russia. "The year 2015 will be the trial period for the new spearhead," *Die Welt* reports, citing NATO sources.

The new force is to conduct exercises and participate in a major NATO exercise planned for next September in Italy, Spain and Portugal, called Trident Juncture. In case of a serious emergency, the force could quickly intervene in the border regions of Russia, the newspaper reports. It could be supported by air and naval units from France and Spain, which would give it the ability to carry out a major military action against Russia.

The report in *Die Welt* underscores the central role of the German government in NATO's provocations against Russia. In September, the German Air Force assumed control of air surveillance of the Baltic Sea. At the same time, Germany doubled troop numbers at the multi-national Northeast Corps in Stettin, Poland. Last week, German General Hans-Lothar Domröse raised the prospect of major military manoeuvres involving tens of thousands of soldiers on the Russian border.



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