

# NATO doubles combat forces in Eastern Europe

Johannes Stern  
6 February 2015

The defence ministers of the NATO military alliance decided at a meeting Thursday at NATO headquarters in Brussels to double their combat forces in eastern Europe. The imperialist powers are massing their troops to compel Russia to make concessions and subordinate itself to their interests in Eastern Europe and Asia.

NATO's rapid reaction force (NRF), composed of ground, sea, air and special forces, is to comprise 30,000 soldiers in future. The number of the troops, previously set at 13,000, is to be more than doubled. Of these, 5,000 soldiers will be trained within a year for a special emergency rapid reaction force. This spearhead will be ready to deploy in a crisis situation within 48 hours, and the entire NRF force within a week.

In addition, NATO agreed to station six so-called command and control units in the three Baltic states, as well as Poland, Romania and Bulgaria. According to NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, the command units are "important units" because they "will plan, they will organise exercises. And they will be key for connecting national forces with NATO reinforcements."

At the same time, NATO's northeast corps in Stettin, Poland, which serves as NATO's headquarters in Eastern Europe, is to be further expanded. Similar centres are to be established in southeast Europe.

Stoltenberg left no doubt that these measures were directly aimed at Russia. He described them as "the biggest reinforcement of NATO since the end of the Cold War."

At a press conference, he said, "Everything we do, when it comes to increasing our own collective defence, by establishing an enhanced NATO Response Force and establishing the very high readiness force, the Spearhead Force... is a response to what we are

seeing from Russia over a period of time, and it is in full accordance with our international obligations. So this is something we do as a response to the aggressive actions of Russia violating international law and annexing Crimea."

Germany, which invaded the USSR in the World War II and conducted a brutal war of extermination in Eastern Europe, is playing a central role in the NATO offensive. An article in the online edition of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ), provocatively titled "Germans to the front!" documented how Berlin is pushing forward with rearmament in Eastern Europe behind the backs of the population.

The German-Dutch command centre in Münster, which has been leading NATO's land-based forces since the middle of January, will now also take over leadership of the rapid reaction force. The centre of the spearhead will thus be composed of an airborne brigade of the Dutch army with 3,000 men. The German army is contributing a battalion of tank grenadiers from Marienburg, Saxony with 900 soldiers. Norway will also send artillery which can be rapidly deployed. In addition, there will be 450 soldiers from the multinational force at the corps' headquarters.

Furthermore, Germany will double its contingent of troops at Stettin, from which 60,000 soldiers would be commanded in the event of war between Russia and a NATO member. With this additional personnel, the troops already stationed there are to be given the capacity to respond more quickly in a serious situation.

In April, a German paratroop company will reinforce American units which have been stationed in Eastern Europe since last year. They are to be deployed in Poland, then in Lithuania and Latvia. From September, the German air force will once again participate in air reconnaissance in the Baltic Sea. Germany already sent

Eurofighters to the Baltic last year. However, at the beginning of this year they were temporarily removed.

The article's author, Thomas Gutschker, is well connected to the military due to his previous work as a journalist with the German army, and he gives an idea of how far advanced NATO's plans for war against Russia are. He described the military concept plan for leading the NATO rapid reaction force, which was agreed by NATO defence ministers in Brussels.

"The NATO supreme commander gives the alarm to the rapid response force. The parts of the force then meet at a joint location. From there, they will be brought to the deployment zone. This makes coordination easier, and political consultation, both in the North Atlantic Council as well as in capital cities. In Germany, the parliament would have to meet. In the case of imminent danger, the German government can unilaterally decide to send troops. Parliament would then have a retrospective right," he wrote.

The article describes the logistical difficulties confronted by the German army. Although it had since its Afghanistan mission "experience in the deploying of troops and heavy weaponry," now "everything is to be done very quickly and new questions are posed: does the railway company have enough flat carriages to transport tanks? Or is it easier to charter a ship that can be loaded and unloaded at the same time? For the extremely rapid reaction force aircraft will be required that only the Americans have. In the summer, a major deployment exercise is planned, the second NATO test."

German defence minister Ursula von der Leyen (Christian Democratic Union, CDU) called the NATO decisions a "sign of unity and decisiveness" and "important for NATO's internal strength." In an interview with the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, she was full of praise for the German-led rapid response force, which "is capable of deploying within a few days," and she hailed Germany's return to an aggressive foreign policy.

Over the past year, Germany has "appropriately assumed responsibility in all of the major crisis situations: in the Ukraine-Russia conflict as well as in the struggle against the so-called Islamic State, in Africa, in Afghanistan. The same goes for our major contribution to the internal security of NATO. We have influenced the West's actions, diplomatically and

militarily. That is responsibility."

In reality, the foreign policy of the German government and the west is not only not "responsible," but ruthless and dangerous. At the beginning of 2014 President Gauck, foreign minister Steinmeier and von der Leyen announced the end of Germany's restraint in foreign policy at the Munich Security Conference.

Only a few weeks later, Berlin and Washington organised a coup in Ukraine, backed by extreme right-wing and fascist forces, to install a pro-Western government and encircle Russia. One year later, the conflict in Ukraine provoked by the West threatens to escalate into an open war with Russia, a nuclear power.

Parallel to NATO's meeting, US secretary of state John Kerry arrived in Kiev to reassure the regime--which is conducting a brutal civil war against the population in eastern Ukraine--of his support. The US will not close its eyes while Russian tanks and fighters are crossing the border, Kerry told Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko.

Russia issued a warning to the US about arming the Ukrainian government's forces against the pro-Russian separatists in the east. The announcement at the beginning of the week that the US would supply lethal weapons to Kiev could "colossally damage US-Russian relations," said Alexander Lukashevich, the spokesman for the Russian foreign ministry.



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](http://wsws.org/contact)**