

G7 conference to take place behind wall of high security

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The so-called leaders of the free world will meet for the annual G7 conference on June 7 and 8 in a hermetically sealed high-security zone. The event will be held at Elmau Castle, a luxury resort in the Bavarian Alps, roughly 100 km south of Munich.

The massive security operation is aimed at cordoning delegates from opposition to the deeply unpopular austerity, militarist and anti-democratic policies being pursued by the leaders of the imperialist governments.

The German government has set the cost of the G7 conference at around €130 million, of which €40 million is to be covered by the federal government and the rest by the state of Bavaria. But this does not include the overtime hours for 20,000 police officers who will be deployed for the security of the seven heads of government and their armies of thousands of security personnel and advisers. This includes 2,000 officers from Austria, with 24 specialists from the anti-terror unit “Cobra.”

Rolf von Hohenhau, president of the taxpayers’ association in Bavaria, estimates that the true cost will be more in the region of €360 million. The chairman of the German police trade union (GDP) Benker essentially confirmed this, given the cost of night shifts, weekend and high-risk premiums. In addition, there are the costs of overnight accommodation and care for the thousands accompanying the delegations. The overall cost will considerably surpass the amount spent on the 2007 summit in the northern German seaside resort of Heiligendamm.

Germany holds the chair of the conference this year and is the host. As well as German chancellor Angela Merkel, six other heads of government will take part: US president Barack Obama, UK prime minister David Cameron, French president François Hollande, Italian prime minister Matteo Renzi, Japanese prime minister

Shinzō Abe and Canadian prime minister Stephen Harper.

Russian president Vladimir Putin, a member since 1998, was expelled from the G8 circle in March 2014 over the annexation of Crimea and the Ukraine crisis.

In April, the G7 foreign ministers held a conference in Lübeck to prepare the meeting of the heads of government. In addition, finance ministers and central bank governors met in Dresden between May 27 and 29 at the invitation of German finance minister Wolfgang Schäuble and Bundesbank governor Jens Weidmann.

As with the G8 conference at Heiligendamm in 2007, a large area around the conference has been sealed off. The security belt around the castle is 16 km long. A 7-km long steel barricade encircles the castle, equipped with cameras, movement sensors and every kind of digital security technology.

This year, soldiers from the German army and personnel from the German border protection force and federal criminal agency will be deployed. Horse-mounted police from Berlin will operate in the area around the castle. Robert Heimberger, the district president of the police in southern Upper Bavaria, warned, “We will act decisively and with little hesitation against people planning violence.”

The right to demonstrate has been severely curtailed. A camp of G7 opponents was banned on the spurious grounds it was located in an area at high risk of flooding.

In February, the Weilheim-Schongau administrative district office held a closed door meeting with mayors from locations near the castle. The mayors were reportedly told to pressure local farmers not to rent their land to G7 protesters and to spread manure on the surrounding fields.

Since the Elmau Castle is surrounded by mountains,

security officials say they will seal off all mountain paths facing the castle, ostensibly to prevent the summit from being targeted by military-style weapons.

A representative of the taxpayers' association reported to *Focus* magazine that temporary prisons were also being established. The president of the Munich II district court, Christian Schmidt-Sommerfeld, stated that five judges would be ready to serve from May 28 to enable immediate action against unwanted protesters. It can be assumed the preparations also include the infiltration of undercover officers into the opposition movement, similar to what happened eight years ago at Heiligendamm.

In the lead-up to the conference, the federal criminal agency reviewed the details of some 10,000 personnel employed at Elmau Castle as suppliers, service providers or hotel staff.

Roads were newly tarred or constructed for the conference and bridges strengthened. The infrastructure for communications networks were renewed or improved to include fibre-optic cables for broadband Internet access. Networks for mobile telephone and digital communication were expanded; canals, wells and springs fitted with surveillance equipment; and drainage systems expanded in preparation for high rainfall.

The fire brigade and disaster-response services have been equipped with new vehicles and buildings. The hotel's owner, Müller-Elmau, was paid €3 million for renovations.

The 10 suites for the heads of government are identical, "so that none of them feel disadvantaged," stated the hotel manager. Additional funds were used to renovate and modernise nearby administrative locations. However, the majority of the money will be spent on the vast security apparatus.

Even the Schengen treaty—which abolished passport and other types of border controls for 26 European countries—will be temporarily suspended. Border controls to Austria and Italy will be introduced, remaining in place until June 15.

All of this is necessary to show the heads of government "a beautiful part of Germany," Merkel told a magazine. The right atmosphere was "important for the results of such a conference," she believed. Important topics would be discussed, such as the preparation of the UN climate conference and the

lessons from the Ebola epidemic in Africa.

With her remarks, Merkel was following a pattern she used during the 2007 conference, providing a "humanitarian" cover for the reactionary policies of the G7 states and the growing tensions between them. If the main subjects to be discussed were climate change and health policy, the exclusion of Russia would serve no purpose.

Instead, the main issues at the conference will be how to proceed in the Ukraine crisis, the confrontation with China in Asia and the wars in the Middle East. In addition, the economic conflicts within the European Union, growing competition with the US and the spying on all sides by intelligence agencies hover over the summit.

Neither the US nor the European powers will allow the beautiful view of the Bavarian landscape to distract them from promoting their competing interests. Notwithstanding the absence of Russia, and in spite of the welcome at Munich airport by boys and girls in lederhosen, as well as a company of traditional Bavarian mountain guards, the meeting between the heads of government will be far from jocular.

The "leaders of the free world" will agree only on one point: their economic and political interests will be pursued through military force and attacks on their own populations, including austerity measures and the further move to authoritarian rule.



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