

Highest-ranking German NATO general urges air strikes against Taliban

Johannes Stern
10 November 2015

Hans-Lothar Domröse, Germany's highest-ranking NATO general and head of the Allied Joint Force Command in Brunssum in the Netherlands, has called for the resumption of combat operations in Afghanistan. On the fringes of the large-scale NATO maneuver "Trident Juncture," taking place under his leadership, Domröse declared last Tuesday in Zaragoza, Spain, that "a robust consultation" was necessary in Afghanistan.

For the four-star general whose father, Lothar Domröse, fought in World War II as a company commander of the Wehrmacht on the Eastern Front and later built up the post-war German army (Bundeswehr), such "consultation" includes air strikes against the Taliban. "If we see that a Taliban attack is taking place, we must be able to repulse it", Domröse said.

According to *Spiegel Online*, the general has called for a "rethink" on NATO military assistance for Afghan forces. Such assistance should include, "together with possible air strikes in the event of Taliban attacks on towns or military bases, better provision for local security forces with reconnaissance photos, operational advice and tactical support."

Domröse is evidently frustrated by the recent setbacks suffered by NATO in Afghanistan. "The Afghans are tardy in everything they do and all the international players are now disappointed," the general complained in Spain. "It's not going as fast as we thought."

Domröse was alluding to the growing presence of the Taliban in recent months. Following the takeover of the northern Afghan city of Kunduz at the end of September by about 2,000 armed fighters, the widely hated puppet regime in Kabul, relying on massive US air support, only slowly regained control of the city.

Kunduz has proved to be a debacle for German imperialism. For years the city and entire province were under German control when the country led the Regional Command North of the NATO mission, ISAF. The

Bundeswehr had its central camp stationed in Kunduz for many years.

The belligerent remarks by Domröse make clear that, behind closed doors, the ruling elite is discussing and preparing for another massive combat mission in Afghanistan.

During the offensive of the Taliban in Kunduz a month ago, Defense Minister Ursula von der Leyen (CDU) had called for a review of NATO's withdrawal plan and warned of decisions based on "rigid timelines." Just one month later, it is generally agreed that the mission of the remaining 850 Bundeswehr soldiers in Mazar-e-Sharif and Kabul will not only be extended but greatly expanded.

On November 5 leading German foreign policy politicians from the governing grand coalition demonstratively lined up behind Domröse. The defense spokesman for the Social Democratic Party (SPD), Rainer Arnold, told *Focus* magazine: "The gloomy picture painted by Domröse is certainly warranted. The advisory and training mission must be continued as long as the Afghans need it. "The Afghan forces also need" air support, which in his view "should be undertaken by the United States."

His party colleague Wolfgang Hellmich, chairman of the Defense Committee of the German Bundestag, made a similar appeal: "Is Domröse's declaration an expression of failure in Afghanistan? No. On the contrary: we have to continue in order to secure the success already achieved. The fundamental decision to extend the mandate is correct, and the expansion of the Bundeswehr mandate also makes sense."

Florian Hahn, the chairman of the working group on Foreign, Security and European policy (ASP), was even more explicit. The leading member of the Christian Social Union (CSU) advised NATO "not to tend toward half solutions". The "politically motivated decision by Obama

to terminate engagement in Afghanistan early” had been a “mistake”, which now had to be corrected by extending the mission.

It is not especially surprising that Hahn of all people is backing Domröse’s fantasies of a massive air war in Afghanistan. He is one of the leading ideologues in Berlin arguing for war and has for a long time pleaded for the re-arming of the German air force.

In the September issue of European Security & Technology, a German magazine for military and arms policy, he wrote an article titled “The new challenges require a strong air force”: “We urgently need a full equipping of our army. We must not make the mistake of one-sidedly concentrating on the modernization of tank battalions to deal with the threat of Russian aggression. An adequate response to the new conflicts of the 21st century can only be achieved with a modern air force.”

The public comments by generals like Domröse and security politicians such as Arnold, Hellmich and Hahn are an indication of the aggressiveness with which the German elite is once again preparing to defend the geostrategic and economic interests of German imperialism, 70 years after the end of World War II.

The brutality with which the German military and ministers pursue their policy is staggering. Just a few days before Domröse announced his war plans, Federal Interior Minister Thomas de Maizière had declared that Afghanistan was “now second on the list of countries” from which migrants were fleeing to Germany, and that this was “unacceptable.” Germany had paid out large sums of money in development aid and could expect that “Afghans stay in their country.” He went on to declare that he would step up the rate of repatriations in future.

A terrible crime against the Afghan people is being prepared: the German government is seeking to deport thousands of refugees to Afghanistan, who have fled the NATO led war, only to possibly bomb them again later from the air.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact