

German defense minister announces combat mission in Mali

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The German army is preparing a massive expansion of its operations in Mali, beginning with a dangerous combat mission in the northern part of the country. Defense Minister Ursula von der Leyen made the announcement on Tuesday at a meeting of the EU defense ministers in Brussels.

Von der Leyen had already responded positively to the official request of her French counterpart Jean-Yves Le Drian for support following the terror attacks last week in Paris, stating “We will listen very carefully to what France has to say to us and attentively analyze France’s requests. It is obvious that we will do everything in our power to extend our aid and support.”

For the first time in the history of the EU the French government has asked all member states for their support in response to an armed attack. It referred to paragraph 7 of article 42 of the EU treaty, which says that if “a Member State is the victim of armed aggression on its territory, the other Member States shall have towards it an obligation of aid and assistance by all the means in their power.” According to the French government the terror attacks in Paris fall into this category.

The defense minister made no secret of the fact that the German army is now preparing a massive military campaign in the name of the “war on terror.” In Brussels, Von der Leyen claimed that the French government was right when it said that the fight against the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and terrorism “is not restricted to Syria and Iraq.”

The government in Berlin is now considering how it can expand its engagement within the UN mission MINUSMA (United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali) in the contested northern region of the country.

“Emergency personnel are urgently needed in Mali in

order to determine where in this enormous country terror groups and militias are active,” von der Leyen told the newspaper *Bild am Sonntag*. “Currently, the Netherlands has taken charge of this work, but the German army can provide relief starting in 2016 based on its extensive reconnaissance capabilities,” she continued. In order that “our soldiers [...] can protect themselves,” they would need “a robust mandate.”

According to *Spiegel Online*, the defense ministry wants to station a reconnaissance company in Gao along with “Luna” type drones. Military experts expect “a German contingent of up to 700 men, who can be deployed to Mali starting in Spring 2016.” To date only eight German soldiers are participating in MINUSMA. About 200 more German soldiers are participating in training exercises with the Malian army within the framework of the EU mission, EUTM.

The effort by the German government to cast the largest and most dangerous deployment of German troops since Afghanistan as a reaction to the terror attacks in Paris is cynical propaganda. In reality, the military campaign was planned long ago. On October 4, the defense ministry received a report from the exploration team that toured the northern part of the country in preparation for a military campaign.

The same rapacious aims that drove German imperialism to Africa before World War I, and then again in World War II under the Nazis, are behind the current intervention. The *World Socialist Web Site* has already written about the “objectives of the Africa policy guidelines of the federal government,” which was adopted in May 2014. This document reads like a strategy paper for the exploitation of the raw material-rich continent by German imperialism in the 21st century.

The first part of the document is entitled “Starting

position: the growing relevance of Africa for Germany and Europe.” It reads: “Africa’s potential is the result of a demographic development with a future market of high economic growth, rich natural resources, potential for agricultural production and independent food security ... African markets are developing dynamically beyond the raw materials economy and will be increasingly interesting for the German economy.”

The second section, entitled “Our engagement in Africa,” demands the strengthening of “the political, security and development policy engagement of Germany in Africa.” The German government is pursuing “the aim of acting in a way that is early, fast, decisive and substantial and based on human rights and oriented to interests.” This explicitly includes military interventions. The German government wants to “deploy *the entire spectrum of its available means* ” across different government agencies (emphasis in original). This includes “political, security policy, development policy, regional policy, economic, scientific and cultural” means.

The German ruling elite is now trying to use the atrocious attacks in Paris as a pretext for carrying forward the return of German imperialism to Africa. In an interview with the *Rheinische Post*, former army General Inspector Harald Kujat declared in the best German imperialist manner, “We could also take on a leading role in Mali. That would be rather a challenge, but we could get it done, even if there are still soldiers deployed in Afghanistan and other missions and in the refugee problem.”



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