

European governments plan intensified military intervention in Syria

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The imperialist powers are responding to the shooting down of a Russian jet by Turkey on Tuesday by massively escalating their intervention in Syria.

On Wednesday morning, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* reported that “all parties” were in the process of “escalating the military conflict,” in order to “create the best strategic position for the final minutes of the end game in Syria.”

Events moved quickly in Europe’s capitals throughout the day. German Chancellor Angela Merkel (Christian Democratic Union, CDU) met with her ministers in Berlin to discuss possible military assistance to France. In the early evening, the grand coalition’s parliamentary fractions from the CDU, Christian Social Union (CSU) and Social Democrats (SPD) were informed at meetings called at short notice about the plan for an intervention in Syria.

The Bundeswehr (German army) will support the war against ISIS with six reconnaissance aircraft. Tornado jets will be supplied with highly sensitive cameras able to detect enemy fighters even under camouflage nets. According to initial reports, the data will be sent live to the American, French, British and some Arab militaries to identify their targets.

This means the German intervention will be offensive from the start. It will be the third German combat mission in the history of the German Bundeswehr after Yugoslavia and Afghanistan.

Additionally Germany will send tanker aircraft to refuel French Mirage fighter-jets in the air. The Bundeswehr will also send a frigate with surface-to-air missiles to support the French aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle.

The defence spokesman for the CDU/CSU fraction, Henning Otte (CDU), said, “We will not only strengthen the training mission in northern Iraq. In

Syria we will push forward with our engagement in the fight against IS with Tornado reconnaissance planes.” Since IS could only be defeated militarily, “all options must therefore be considered in our engagement in the fight against Islamist terrorism.”

Although the shooting down of the Russian jet initially provoked shock within sections of the ruling elite, they are now gripped with war fever. During Wednesday’s budget debate in parliament, all parties indicated their backing for Germany’s military intervention in Mali and urged the expansion of the war against IS.

CDU deputy Karl-Georg Wellmann summed up the attitude of the ruling elite in a Deutschlandfunk interview, stating, “Everyone in parliament was in favour of combatting IS. Everyone knows that these murderers will not be overcome with fine phrases, but rather military methods are necessary. And the times are over when we Germans could say we want to earn money, and are responsible for trade and exchange, but others are responsible for the military.”

War-hungry propagandists in the bourgeois press are informing their readers that “it will not work without ground troops” (Stefan Kornelius in *SZ*), but rather it is necessary to “take the struggle into the terrorist hell” and with an army in the region to “hunt and strike down the Islamic State and not permit [the terrorists] to rest” (Josef Joffe in *Die Zeit*).

In London British Prime Minister David Cameron once again urged support in the British parliament for air strikes in Syria. “I think we should now take the decision to expand British air strikes on IS into Syria,” he said before his speech. It wasn’t right that other countries had to defend Britain’s security, he added. IS could no longer be allowed to use Syria as a “sanctuary.” A vote on Cameron’s war plans is

expected in the coming week.

Although the British prime minister at least officially does not call for the deployment of ground troops, former foreign minister William Hague argued in the *Daily Telegraph* in favour of the British army supporting a ground operation by soldiers from Middle Eastern countries. British military experts are also speaking out in favour of combatting IS on the ground. Whoever is not prepared for military intervention in the struggle of the major powers for influence in the Middle East, will be left out of any division of the spoils. Michael Clarke from the Royal United Services Institute declared: “Whoever drives out IS, will determine the policy in Syria. Whoever does the job on the ground, decides what happens. Whoever stays out of it must live with the consequences.”

In Moscow, French President Francois Hollande met Russian President Vladimir Putin Thursday evening. The visit was part of efforts by Hollande to forge a coalition against the IS incorporating the United States, Russia and the European powers. “We need to achieve this broad coalition to defeat terrorism,” Hollande said.

Putin added, “We are ready for such cooperation, even more so, we consider it absolutely necessary.”

The US-backed shooting down of a Russian SU-24 by Turkey on Tuesday was a blatant attempt to thwart Hollande's plans. Unlike Paris and Berlin, which look upon Putin as a potential ally the United States and Turkey regard him as an opponent. The primary objective of the US and Turkey is to overthrow Assad. To this end these two powers are working together with the same Islamist forces whose positions have been bombed by Russia.

Tensions have continued to increase since the shooting down of the Russian plane. On Thursday Ankara dismissed demands by Moscow for an apology. There is no reason for Turkey “to apologise for a situation in which it has right on its side,” declared Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu. For his part Putin had previously announced sanctions against Turkey and attacked President Erdogan. There was neither a “clear apology from the Turkish leadership” nor a “promise to punish those responsible for the crime,” Putin said, according to a Russian TV report.

According to a report in the *Washington Post* titled “American and Russian militaries don’t agree about much in Syria,” spokesman for the US-led

“International Alliance against Islamic State” (Operation Inherent Resolve), Col. Steve Warren, accused Russia of having to “answer for numerous civilian casualties” due to “dumb bombs”. He said that numbers given by unnamed human rights groups of “upwards of 1,000 civilian casualties [...] including over 100 kids” are “probably fairly accurate.” The Colonel added: “This is sloppy military work [...]. This is the reckless and irresponsible, imprecise and frankly uncaring approach to operations in Syria that the Russians have taken on”.

One does not know whether to laugh or cry. The Russian intervention in Syria has nothing progressive about it and increases the risk of war between the great powers. But if anything is “irresponsible” or “insensitive”, then it is the war policy of the US. Washington and its allies have reduced the Middle East to a pile of rubble and are responsible for the deaths of over one million people in Iraq, in Afghanistan, in Libya and in Syria.

The same politicians and journalists that support the expansion of the Western military intervention in Syria know very well that even worse crimes and disasters are being prepared. Kornelius writes, “There was never a greater threat of the war spiraling completely out of control with neighbours and involved powers drawn into the carnage as in a maelstrom.”

Joshua Walker from the pro-government think-tank, The German Marshall Fund, ludicrously called upon Washington in an article “to prevent World War Three in Syria.”



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