# German parliament approves expansion of military mission in Afghanistan

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By a large majority, Germany's parliament voted on Thursday in favour of a government motion to extend the German military intervention in Afghanistan until at least the end of 2016. The Bundeswehr contingent, deployed in the north under the "train, assist and advice command" (TAAC) in Mazer-E Sharif, is to be expanded from 130 to 980 soldiers as part of NATO's Resolute Support mission.

The Resolute Support mission was adopted at the NATO summit in Chicago in 2012 to replace NATO's ISAF (International Security Assistance Force) mission, which expired on December 31, 2014. Even then, it was clear to the imperialist powers that the withdrawal of NATO forces would result in a loss of control of the strategically important country, which had been invaded and occupied by a US-led offensive in 2001.

Ever since, the German government has sought to sell the mission as a training, assist and advice operation for the Afghan army. From the outset, this was utter nonsense. In the wake of the strengthening of the Taliban over recent months, a new combat mission is being prepared.

With 9,000 soldiers, the US has by far the largest contingent of troops, which have a clear mandate to engage in combat. The motion adopted by the German parliament makes explicit reference to the military tasks of the Bundeswehr soldiers. Under the heading "In extremis support," a military concept for emergency situations, its tasks include "the securing, protection and evacuation and recovery of military and civilian forces and resources of the Resolute Support mission, as well as personnel from the international community and designated persons."

Defence Minister Ursula Von der Leyen noted in parliament that "the withdrawal of NATO from the combat mission [had] not been without consequence." It had "in part discouraged the Afghan army and encouraged the Taliban." She therefore considered it "appropriate that we now correct the timeframe of the entire orientation and instead return to the criteria according to which our presence is measured solely by the progress in the country."

In plain language this means that Western troops will be in Afghanistan for an unlimited amount of time and be involved in combat. It is even being acknowledged in the bourgeois media that after 14 years of Western occupation, Afghanistan has made no progress but is convulsed by civil war, chaos and desperation.

News weekly *Die Zeit* wrote in a recent report that the northern Afghan city of Kunduz had "become a stronghold of militias under the Bundeswehr's watch" and that most of them were "criminal organisations."

*Die Zeit* painted a picture of virtual terrorist rule in the region that has been under German control for years: "Led by warlords, the militias are warring against each other; they raped, robbed, placed bombs under cars. They established posts on the roads to charge passers-by tolls. Frequently there were five or six such posts from different militias, one after another, each one demanding road tolls. Like blood-suckers, they attached themselves to the city's arteries."

The criminal type of occupation policy is to be continued. The Social Democratic Party's foreign policy spokesman, Niels Annen, left no doubt in his speech about Berlin's real interests. By lengthening the operation, the German government intends to strengthen the pro-Western puppet regime in Kabul under the pretext of fighting terrorism. "We know that the current instability is not only the result of the activities of the Taliban. It also has to do with the instability of the Afghan government," he cynically

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declared.

Already on November 23, Von der Leyen called a conference of the defence ministers from the 21 countries with troops in northern Afghanistan, at which the defence minister from Afghanistan, Mohammed Masoom Stanekzai, and the commander of the Resolute Support mission, General John F. Campbell, took part.

Whoever wishes to understand the interests behind Germany's intervention in Afghanistan must study history and read the documents currently being drafted in the foreign affairs and defence ministries.

In a speech to parliament, Von der Leyen praised the century-long relationship between Germany and Afghanistan, as if this amounted to friendly relations outside of any political or economic interests. Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier travelled to Kabul on August 30 to celebrate the anniversary of these relations, where he met with President Abdullah Ghani and Prime Minister Abdullah Abdullah.

The celebration of these relations shows the real interest for Germany in Afghanistan. Already the initiation of relations at the outset of World War I between the two countries was based on definite political interests. The so-called Niedermayer-Hentig Expedition sought to win Afghanistan to the alliance of the central powers.

The strategy of Oscar von Niedermeyer was, with Afghanistan's help, to mobilise Indian tribes against the colonial power Britain. Von Niedermeyer was honoured with a knighthood by the Kaiser shortly after his expedition. In 1933 he joined the Nazi Party and in 1939 assumed a professorial post at Friedrich Wilhelm University (today Humboldt University).

The historical relations between Germany and Afghanistan have been dominated by geostrategic interests from the outset.

Defence policy guidelines from 2011 define these goals very clearly: "Free trade routes and the securing of the supply of raw materials are of vital significance for the future of Germany and Europe. The development of, securing of and access to natural resources, trade routes and markets are being newly organised worldwide."

The guidelines continue: "German security interests include: … to make possible a free and unhindered world trade as well as the free access to the high seas and natural resources."

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