

German government creates new “Anti-Terror Unit”

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German Federal Police have created a new “Anti-Terror Unit.” On December 16, the first 50 men of the “Unit for Securing Evidence and Arrests Plus” (BFE+) marched before interior minister Thomas de Maizière in Blumberg near Berlin. The BFE+, recruited from regular federal and state police agencies, will initially consist of 250 officers. They will be placed on standby in five locations in Germany through the end of next year.

The unit is heavily armed. In addition to riot gear, balaclavas and bulletproof vests, its standard equipment will include the G36 assault rifle used by the German military. With the exception of Bavaria, state regulations for the arming of police permit the use of submachine guns in addition to handguns. Until now, assault rifles were not included in the equipment of police units on the grounds that, as large calibre weapons, they could not be aimed precisely and could easily wound innocent bystanders. Additionally, the new special unit will be equipped with armoured vehicles.

The BFE+ is so martial in its appearance that even some in the bourgeois media have criticised it. One article in Zeit Online entitled, “The police are playing war,” reads: “Assault rifles, urban warfare—the police of the new Anti-Terror Unit BFE+ think and behave like soldiers. They soften the separation between the military and police.”

Political scientist and sociologist Rafael Behr warned in an interview of “equating terror with war and building up the police more and more because of it.” The new unit exists in a “grey area.” In Germany, there has long been a “strict separation ... The police are responsible for domestic problems, the army for foreign ones.”

The formation of a paramilitary police unit in Germany marks a turning point in the country’s postwar history. The new special unit BFE+ has been placed by the interior ministry under the purview of the federal police, which emerged in 2005 from the Federal Border Guard

and is permitted to use military equipment. With this manoeuvre, the ministry circumvents the separation of police and military embedded in the constitution and, in effect, abolishes it.

This separation was formalized in the constitution after World War II, following the experience of the Freikorps in the Weimar Republic and the SA and SS of the Nazis, made up in large part by soldiers recruited from the Freikorps itself. The Freikorps played a central role in combatting the revolutionary uprisings in the Weimar Republic and the SA and SS did the same in the destruction of the organised workers movement after the Nazis took power.

The founding of the BFE+ is alleged to be a reaction of the German government to the terror attacks in Paris on November 13. In reality, plans for the introduction of paramilitary police troops have been planned for substantially longer and are one component of a comprehensive rearmament at home and abroad. For years, politicians in the government, above all former interior minister Otto Schily (SPD) and current finance minister Wolfgang Schäuble (CDU), have called for the domestic deployment of the military.

As with the military’s combat mission in Syria, the attacks in Paris serve only as a pretext. The majority of the attackers in Paris were known to authorities. The suspected mastermind of the attacks, Abdelhamid Abaaoud, boasted months before, in the IS magazine *Dabiq*, about how he was able to enter Belgium and plan attacks in plain view of the intelligence agencies. Under conditions of increasing class tensions in Germany and the country’s return to an aggressive foreign policy, the ruling elite is now preparing for the suppression of growing opposition within the population.

According to circles close to the federal police, the heavy armament of the BFE+ fulfils a definite purpose. It serves as a deterrent. The range of tasks of the new unit,

however, goes far beyond the official description of combatting terrorism. “The actions for which the BFE+ train are similar to those of the military,” writes *Die Zeit*. According to the statements of a person involved, the new unit acts “as an infantry platoon engaged in urban combat.” The interior ministry reports that the unit, so long as no special operations are pending, “will predominantly be made available for normal daily tasks of the federal police force.” They will also be used at soccer games and at demonstrations. In those situations, heavy rescue vehicles with military equipment will be on standby and made available in the immediate vicinity of an operation site.

The creation of a heavily armed Anti-Terror Unit of the federal police is a warning to all workers and youth in Germany. Above all, recent developments in the US show what the ruling class is preparing in this country. Similar special units of the police (SWAT teams) have long terrorized the population there and have occupied entire cities, as they did during the unrest and protests in Ferguson, Missouri in the summer of 2014. In a commentary entitled “ Ferguson, Missouri: War comes home ,” the *World Socialist Web Site* described the kinds of terrifying developments that will now be introduced in Germany with the creation of the BFE+ and the extensive militarisation of the police:

“SWAT teams decked out in battle fatigues and goggles descended on the city, wielding high-power shotguns and automatic rifles and driving armored attack vehicles ... The forces involved may technically be local police, but what they are engaged in is essentially a military occupation. They look like the military, act like the military and have close ties to the military. Not only have police been armed with military equipment, they have been given a new set of rules. They are being trained to employ the methods used by the US and its allies in Afghanistan, Iraq, Gaza and Ukraine.”



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