German government expands military operations in the Middle East

Johannes Stern
14 October 2016

The German government is once again expanding its operations in the Middle East. Soldiers will begin monitoring Syrian airspace from NATO's so-called Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) reconnaissance aircraft. They will be stationed at the Incirlik air base in Turkey. In addition, current military deployments involving Tornado aircraft, a battleship and reconnaissance equipment will be prolonged till the end of 2017. These decisions were made by the German cabinet on Wednesday.

These measures will intensify the war in Syria and heighten the danger of a direct military confrontation between the Western powers and Russia. The deputy prime minister of Turkey, Numan Kurtulmus, issued a warning yesterday through the news agency Anadolu. If the "proxy war" in Syria continues, he said, "America and Russia will reach the point of waging war." The Syrian civil war has brought the world "to the brink of the beginning of a major regional or world war," he added.

According to the NATO summit agreement in Warsaw at the beginning of July, in the event of a confrontation between Washington and Moscow, the entire Western alliance will be at war with Russia, a nuclear-armed power.

"It is a serious step, above all in a political sense," commented tagesschau.de. "With the AWACS mission, NATO is officially a party to the conflict in Syria and Iraq. Until now, only a coalition of the willing under the leadership of Washington has carried out air attacks beside Russia. With the AWACS mission, the entire alliance is now involved."

In recent days, German politicians and media representatives have aggressively urged tougher action against Russia and Syria. The demands range from new sanctions against Russia or more weapons for the militias close to Al Qaeda all the way to a possible deployment of German ground troops.

In an interview with the German public radio station Deutschlandfunk on Monday, Christian Democratic Union (CDU) diplomat Roderich Kiesewetter called for a "humanitarian corridor safeguarded by the military" in Syria. He left no doubt what political and geostrategic aims lay behind his "humanitarian" propaganda.

Kiesewetter demanded "limited military strikes" against the Assad regime. He said there has always been an international agreement "to combat the IS first and then remove Assad." But Assad is a "greater evil" than Islamic State, and one had to "insist that Assad be removed in a manageable time frame." One could not "simply observe how Russia has taken the initiative and almost brought the entire country of Syria under its hegemony." One could not "permit that in the long run," and had to "prevent it."

The party pushing most aggressively for tougher action against Russia is the Green Party. "The government must urgently initiate proceedings to impose new sanctions against Russia for its barbaric actions in Syria," said, Katrin Göring-Eckardt, the head of the Green faction in parliament, in an interview with the newspaper *Bild am Sonntag*.

The deployment of bunker-penetrating bombs and improvised explosive devices must "be called a war crime and punished accordingly," she said. In addition, the "friendly visits to Mr. Putin" must stop and "pressure" finally put on Russia "so that a no-fly zone can be imposed." After "Moscow and Washington had failed to agree to a ceasefire," Europe had to "take more responsibility."

The measures that Kiesewetter and Göring-Eckardt want to sell as "responsible" and "humanitarian"

© World Socialist Web Site

endanger the lives of millions of people and will increase the threat of a nuclear world war. When the US Senate was discussing the implementation of a “no-fly zone” in Syria at the end of September, the highest ranking US officer, General Joseph Dunford, said, “This would require that we wage war with Syria and Russia.”

On Sunday, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov warned NATO against attacking Russian troops and their allies in Syria. “That is a dangerous game,” he said. “Russia is in Syria because the legitimate government of Syria asked it to be there. It has two bases and an air defence system for the protection of its assets.” Russia would respond to attacks with military force, he declared.

The stationing of AWACS reconnaissance aircraft serves to promote imperialist plans of aggression. AWACS are advance warning and control aircraft fitted with friend-or-foe identification radar. They are deployed in order to locate and identify hostile aircraft and ships at a distance of up to 250 miles and to forward their coordinates to command and control centres that can carry out attacks. Unlike ground-based radar systems, AWACS also provide exact data about low-flying aircraft.

The Left Party is an integral part of these war preparations. Last Wednesday, a delegation of seven parliamentary representatives from all parliamentary factions visited German troops in Incirlik. Before that, there were day-long discussions in Ankara, Turkey. Alexander Neu represented the Left Party on the trip. Neu is chairman of the Left Party group in the defence committee in parliament.

In an interview with *Sputnik Germany*, which, significantly, was carried out on the military base of Incirlik, Neu reported on the role he and his delegation played in the stationing of AWACS.

When the interviewer said that the visit by the German representatives was seen as a sign that “soon nothing else will be able to stand in the way” of the AWACS deployment, Neu said, “That’s exactly how it is.” He said that in light of the tensions between Germany and Turkey in recent months, the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) had threatened on Monday that “if German representatives continued to be unable to visit the army in Incirlik, it [the SPD] would not agree with the lengthening of the current deployment of German troops in Turkey. Or to any possible AWACS deployment.”

For this reason, there have been “very strong diplomatic efforts, also from Washington,” on account of which they are now allowed to enter. Turkey wanted to prevent a situation in which “German participation in the current missions as well as a future AWACS mission do not take place.” In the end, it is “a give and take... We are allowed in, we are allowed to visit the army and the way is free for an agreement of the parliament to both missions.”

While the Left Party is playing an integral role in war preparations, it is trying to lull the population, which is increasingly worried about the rapid development of war, into a false sense of security. “I was just on the German military base in Incirlik. The mood is relatively relaxed. I cannot say that the situation is tense. It is rather the opposite,” said Neu cynically. He “also asked what the relationship with the Turkish soldiers is like. And that seems to be going well on a professional level.”

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

© World Socialist Web Site