NATO forces menace Russia

# US Army, German Bundeswehr dispatch thousands of troops to Eastern Europe

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A massive deployment of US and NATO troops to Poland and the Baltic states is underway. According to a December 30 statement by the German Bundeswehr (Armed Forces) Press and Information Centre, "As part of the NATO operation 'Atlantic Resolve,' three US transport ships are expected in Bremerhaven in the first week of January."

The statement noted that in early November, "Soldiers of the 3rd Brigade of the 4th US Infantry Division began loading the ships with vehicles and containers." Overall, "more than 2,500 pieces of cargo (trucks, combat vehicles, trailers, containers) [were] initially shipped to Germany and then transported to Poland and other countries in Central and Eastern Europe." The materiel is to "arrive in the period January 6-8 by maritime transport in Bremerhaven, and will then be transported to Poland by rail and military convoys by approximately January 20."

Earlier this month, the newspaper *Kieler Nachrichten* called the arms build-up "the greatest redeployment operation of the US Army to Germany since 1990." More than 2,000 tanks, howitzers, jeeps and trucks are being deployed for NATO exercises in Eastern Europe that will continue for nine months.

According to statements by the US Army Europe, 4,000 additional troops and 2,000 tanks will "contribute to and strengthen the alliance's deterrence and defense." Colonel Todd Bertulis, deputy head of logistics of the Stuttgart-based US Command in Europe (EUCOM), said the operation will ensure that "the necessary combat power is brought to the right place in Europe at the right time."

Lieutenant General Frederick "Ben" Hodges, commander of US forces in Europe, said, "Three years after the last American tanks left the continent, we need to get them back." He made the statement during a visit to the Logistics School of the Bundeswehr in Garlstedt, Lower Saxony. He told journalists that the measures were a "response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the illegal annexation of Crimea."

Russia was preparing for war, the general claimed. All Russian ministries would, he declared, "prepare accordingly—mobilize, if you will." He continued, "This does not mean that there necessarily has to be a war, none of this is inevitable, but Moscow is preparing for the possibility."

This presentation turns reality on its head. The deployment of US combat troops is part of NATO preparations for war against Russia, the culmination of a continual eastward expansion of NATO since the dissolution of the Soviet Union 25 years ago.

In Ukraine, it is not Russia that is the aggressor, but the US and NATO. Washington and Berlin, in close collaboration with fascist forces, organised a coup against the pro-Russian president, Viktor Yanukovych, in early 2014, installing a rabidly anti-Russian, nationalist regime in Kiev. That move sparked a separatist rebellion by Russian-speaking regions in the country's east, which Moscow has supported and the Kiev government, backed by Western arms and money, has sought, unsuccessfully, to violently suppress.

The events in Ukraine were seized on by the US, the European Union and NATO to impose economic and diplomatic sanctions and dramatically expand NATO military forces along Russia's western border.

In advance of the January 20 inauguration of US President-elect Donald Trump, who has called for a ratcheting down of tensions with Russia in order to

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focus US aggression more directly on China, opposed forces within the US military-intelligence and political establishment are seeking to escalate the confrontation with Moscow.

This week, Republican Senator John McCain toured the Baltic States to assure them of the continued support of the United States. In an interview broadcast by Estonian radio, McCain called for a further build-up of NATO forces against Russia and declared that every "credible member" of the US Congress viewed Russian President Vladimir Putin "for what he is: a thug and a bully and a KGB agent."

In the dangerous escalation against nuclear-armed Russia, which poses the danger of a third world war, the Bundeswehr is playing a central role. "Without the support of the [German] Army, we can go nowhere," Lieutenant General Hodges said during an appearance at the Joint Support Service of the Bundeswehr.

Lieutenant General Peter Bohrer, deputy chief of the Joint Support Service, agreed. "In the past," he said, "Germany was a frontline state. Today we are a transit zone, and one of our key tasks is to undertake common support… We are open to carrying out these tasks together with our American partners."

After arriving in Germany, the American soldiers and their heavy equipment will be moved from Bremerhaven by rail through northern Germany to Eastern Europe. The Bundeswehr press office announced: "Some 900 cars with military materiel will be transported by train from Bremerhaven to Poland. There are also about 600 pieces of freight that will be transported by train to Poland from the military training ground at Bergen-Hohne. Nearly 40 vehicles will travel directly by road from Bremerhaven to Poland."

Germany, which rolled over Eastern Europe in its war of extermination 75 years ago, is preparing to send combat troops to the Baltics. In January, 26 tanks, 100 other vehicles and 120 containers will be transported by train to Lithuania.

In an interview with the military newspaper *Bundeswehr aktuell*, General Volker Wieker confirmed that Germany had agreed with the United States, Canada and the UK at the NATO summit in Warsaw "to take the lead, with each establishing a battle group." Germany will send the 122nd Infantry Battalion. He added that other supplies would follow, "so that we will achieve a so-called Full Operational Capability by mid-year."

What is meant by "full operational capability" was underlined by a public Bundeswehr exercise in Grafenwöhr, where the German battalion prepared for deployment. According to a video report by the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, the manoeuvres involved "an enemy attack on the Lithuanian-Russian border."

The future commander of the NATO Battle Group in Lithuania, Lieutenant-Colonel Christoph Huber, explained the "tactical purpose" of the manoeuvres as follows: "The comrades of the Second Company successfully carried out the battle here…winning time for their comrades and thereby destroying the enemy forces. This is high-intensity combat training."

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