

German parliament votes to redeploy troops to Jordan

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On Wednesday, the German parliament voted by a large majority to redeploy Bundeswehr (Armed Forces) units from the Turkish air base at Incirlik to the Muwaffaq Salti Air Base in Jordan. Four hundred sixty one (461) out of 569 deputies supported the motion presented by the grand coalition of the Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU) and the Social Democratic Party (SPD), with 85 votes against and 23 abstentions.

Since the end of 2015, the Bundeswehr has been involved in the war effort against the so-called Islamic State (IS) in Syria and Iraq, which is also directed against the Syrian government of Bashar al-Assad. With the dispatch of troops to Jordan, the Bundeswehr is continuing its military intervention in the Middle East and is preparing for its expansion.

In the debate, the defence spokesman of the CDU/CSU Bundestag (parliamentary) caucus, Henning Otte, promised, “We will send the tanker aircraft and the Tornados in August. By October at the latest, the soldiers will be fully operational again. That this can happen so quickly is due to the innovative power and the energy of our soldiers.”

SPD foreign affairs spokesman Niels Annen welcomed the fact that German troops were now moving even closer to the war zones in Syria and Iraq. “It is perhaps a coincidence, but not a bad one, that we are in a difficult situation—you all know that the battles are increasing in intensity on the Jordanian border—a country that has absorbed hundreds of thousands of refugees and has proved to be a stable and reliable partner in recent years, that we can now provide this symbolic support”. The stationing of troops was “the right message.”

The attempt by the government to present the deployment of the Bundeswehr as an “anti-terrorist

operation” or even as an initiative for human rights or refugee relief is a deliberate deception. What really concerns German imperialism is the struggle for spheres of influence and raw materials in the Middle East. “The eastern part of Syria has become the site of an advanced end game, in which not only the future order in the country, but also regional power relationships could be decided for decades,” the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* wrote on Tuesday.

With this, the increasingly aggressive intervention of the imperialist powers threatens to unleash a conflagration. Following the shooting down of a Syrian fighter aircraft by the US on June 18, the Russian government announced it would regard all aircraft of the US-led anti-IS coalition flying west of the Euphrates as hostile targets. Thus, the possibility of an armed confrontation between the two largest nuclear powers in the world has become as great as during the Cuban missile crisis in 1962.

The escalation of the war for regime change in Syria is also exacerbating tensions between the imperialist powers and within NATO itself. “The fact that Germany has to withdraw the Bundeswehr from a NATO member state during an ongoing mission because its government refuses to grant our parliamentary deputies permission to visit our soldiers, and that this mission must instead be transferred to a non-NATO country, is a unique event,” Annen declared. With the withdrawal from Incirlik, “relations with Turkey have reached a new low.”

The official reason for the German withdrawal is a ban on visits by Berlin’s parliamentary deputies to the Incirlik air base imposed by the Turkish government, which was not lifted even following a visit by German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel (SPD) to Ankara earlier this month. The Turkish government has

justified its attitude by citing Germany's granting of asylum to Turkish officers who were involved in the failed coup in July 2016. In total, more than 400 Turkish soldiers, diplomats, judges and government employees suspected by the Turkish government of supporting the coup against President Erdogan have applied for asylum in Germany.

Geopolitical conflicts also lie behind the ferocious tensions between Ankara and Berlin. The Left Party and Greens have been arguing for some time that too close cooperation with Turkey limits the offensive of German imperialism in the Middle East. They are demanding a more open collaboration with Kurdish militias such as the PYD, linked to the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK), which is banned in Germany, but which is playing an increasingly important role as a proxy force in the reconquest of former IS strongholds in the northeast of Syria.

In his speech in the Bundestag, Gregor Gysi, chairman of the European Left, criticized the redeployment because it weakened the Kurdish militias, and thus also the fight against IS—and moreover, was too subordinate to US war policy.

“If Germany supplies data to the [NATO] headquarters and Turkey has access to it, the impression might arise [...] that we stand on the side of Turkey, acting against the Kurds and thus indirectly helping Islamic State,” Gysi declared. Turkey had “bombed the Kurds in Syria. They [the Kurds], however, are conducting the ground war against Islamic state, and will be thereby weakened.” The demand of the Greens and Left Party to “bring the soldiers and their weapons back home and not deploy them to Jordan so that they continue their ambiguous role there” was therefore “justified.”

The joint initiative of the Left Party and the Greens has nothing to do with the rejection of war. Under conditions of growing transatlantic tensions with the US, these parties play a key role in transforming the widespread opposition to the right-wing politics of President Donald Trump into support for a more independent German great power policy, using “humanitarian” phrases.

“It is time that the whole Bundestag understands—by the way, also because of Trump that we have to play a different role,” Gysi told the deputies. “I really beg you: Stop following Trump so poodle-like! Learn to

say no to him!” Germany must “become a mediator, a mediator between Israel and Palestine, in the Syrian war, in the war of Saudi Arabia against Yemen, in the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, and in other crises. I believe that this must be our role after the Second World War, after 1945.”

After two criminal world wars, the government parties are also seeking to use the fairy tale of a rehabilitated Germany as a “mediator” and “peace-maker” to revive German militarism once again. In fact, the German ruling class has long been preparing new and even more comprehensive wars behind the backs of the population. Also on Wednesday, the cabinet agreed armaments projects worth several billion euros. These include the construction of five new K130 warships and new submarines.



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