

# The German government prepares military intervention in Syria

**Peter Schwarz****31 May 2019**

The German government is preparing to provide military support for a US-planned “safe zone” in northern Syria. The zone is intended to protect the Kurdish militias, which fought against the Islamic State (IS) on the side of the US, from both Syrian and Turkish troops.

Appropriate plans are to be discussed in Berlin on Friday, when US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo makes his first official visit to Germany—a visit which has been postponed several times.

Spiegel Online reported on Thursday that the German government “signaled to the US in months of secret talks that it would be prepared to participate militarily in securing the safe zone”. The Americans had “in recent months repeatedly requested for German commitment behind the scenes, for the first time on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference in mid-February.”

Since then, the German government had sought “a constructive dialogue with Washington”. “In order not to put off the US once again, the Chancellor’s office, the Foreign Office and the Ministry of Defence largely agree that one should not alienate the US regarding the Syrian issue.”

According to Spiegel Online, secret negotiations have taken place almost continuously since the Munich Security Conference. For example, in mid-March, the political heads of the German Ministry of Defence and the Pentagon, Geza Andreas von Geyr and John C. Rood, gathered together “in Berlin in strict confidence all the other nations that had previously participated in the anti-IS coalition.” In April, both the German Defence Minister, Ursula von der Leyen, and Foreign Minister, Heiko Maas, travelled to Washington “to discuss the issue at the highest level.”

According to Spiegel Online it is still open how the German army will participate in the establishment of the safe zone. The dispatch of ground troops has been ruled out for political reasons, but the possibility of aerial

support for a security force has been raised. To this end, Berlin made the offer to Washington of extending the German army’s current mission in Jordan.

Since June 2017, the German army has maintained its own base at a Jordanian air force base under the name “Camp Sonic”. Specially equipped Tornado jets conduct air reconnaissance for the US-led anti-IS coalition from the base. The German Air Force also refuels coalition jets over Syria from the air. The mandate for this mission expires on October 31 and, according to a decision by the German parliament, is not to be extended.

Military officials, however, assume that “the high-resolution images of ‘Tornadoes’ and aerial refuelling” would also be valuable for a future coalition, Spiegel Online reports. “Politically, the mission would also be a symbol that Germany does not refuse to participate in more difficult international missions.”

Military support of a “safe zone” in northern Syria would mean a massive escalation of Germany’s participation in the Syrian war, which from the outset was aimed at ousting the regime of Bashar al-Assad and replacing it with a Western puppet regime.

The German foreign ministry has been intensively involved in the construction of the pro-imperialist Syrian opposition, which relied mainly on al-Qaeda-affiliated Islamist militias. To this end it was supported not only by the SPD and the Greens, but also by the Left Party.

Following the failure of this operation, which has cost the lives of 400,000 civilians and reduced large parts of the country to ruins, the German government is now plunging into a military adventure that involves not only confrontation with the regime in Damascus, but also with its NATO partner Turkey, Iran and the nuclear power, Russia.

Damascus rejects such a “safe zone” because it would massively curtail the country’s sovereignty. Ankara is opposed because it wants to prevent at all costs the

emergence of a Kurdish state on its border, which is under the control of a PKK-affiliated organisation. Tehran, which is being economically starved by the US and threatened with a devastating war, is closely allied with both Damascus and Ankara. And Moscow, which supports the Assad regime militarily and maintains close ties with Tehran and Ankara, quite rightly views the Western offensive in the Middle East as part of a containment strategy against Russia.

Should the German government accede to Pompeo's request for military support for the establishment of a "safe zone", then the official propaganda machinery will immediately begin to proclaim that such a mission is a "humanitarian action" aimed at protecting lives, or a "fight against a dictatorial regime" or something similar. This was already the pattern in the Afghanistan, Iraq and Libyan wars. The latter also began with the establishment of a "safe zone", which then provided the pretext for bombing the country and overthrowing the Gaddafi regime.

No credence should be given to such lies. Washington and its European allies, including Berlin, are pursuing naked imperialist interests in their wars in the Middle East—control of oil, gas and markets, repression and weakening of their rivals, and strengthening their own position as a world power.

Five years ago the German government announced—in the words of then Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier—that it is no longer prepared "to comment on world politics from the sidelines" and intends instead "to engage in foreign and security policy earlier, more decisively and more substantially". Since then Berlin has been massively upgrading its military forces. In the powder keg of today's Middle East, the Germany elite sees another welcome opportunity to translate its goals into action—even at the risk of a Third World War.



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