

“Defender 2020”: NATO powers threaten war against Russia

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In the coming year, armed forces from 17 NATO states, including the US and Germany, will carry out the “Defender 2020” manoeuvres. With the largest military deployment in Europe in 25 years, the Western military alliance is preparing for a war against the nuclear power Russia, which in turn is conducting its own massive military manoeuvres.

As the German defence ministry told the parliamentary defence committee last week, the US military will be transferring a full division to Poland and the Baltic between April and May next year. A total of 37,000 soldiers will participate, up to 20,000 of them being brought across the Atlantic from the US along with tanks and military equipment.

The aim of the “exercise” is to rehearse a “rapid deployment of larger units across the Atlantic and through Europe” to “ensure that the appropriate procedures work in a crisis situation.” The “linchpin” of the mobilization of the US armed forces will be Germany and its Bundeswehr (armed forces).

As the newspaper *Die Welt* states, referring to the letter from the defence ministry, Germany has an “essential interest” in “proving” its “central role” in the transatlantic military alliance. The German army, according to the paper, will participate in the manoeuvres in the areas of “combat” and “combat support” and play a key role in the “leadership” of American troops. As part of its role as a logistical “hub” and NATO transit country, Germany will establish three so-called convoy support centres for the marching columns, as well as a tank facility at the Bergen military training area on the Lüneburg Heath.

The responsible US military brass, who in their publications have blithely compared the manoeuvres with the D-Day invasion of Europe, regard it as an important practical step in their increasing military and

strategic cooperation with Poland.

As early as June of this year, a defence agreement between President Donald Trump and Polish President Andrzej Duda had created the logistical conditions for such a massive deployment of troops. These include a “forward-facing” division headquarters, an air force base, a combat training centre, and other supporting infrastructure. The agreement also included the reinforcement of US troops in Poland to nearly 6,000 and the deployment of a squadron of “Reaper” MQ-9 drones.

Despite growing transatlantic conflicts, the German government is leading the way in the war against Russia. German imperialism is pursuing its own military interests. Berlin sees the exercise as an opportunity to ensure the operational ability of Germany’s Joint Support Enabling Command (JSEC) in Ulm, thereby coming closer to its claim to be Europe’s leading military power.

According to the German defence ministry, the tasks of the NATO command post established last year include the coordination of European troop movements and materiel transports in the event of a “critical development towards an impending confrontation with an equal opponent,” i.e., the outbreak of another great war in Europe.

In order to be able to “perform” optimally at the time of such a “maximum level of effort,” the JSEC writes in its task description, “tasks are already to be fulfilled in peace-time.” In the journal *InfoBrief Heer* published by the Förderkreis Deutsches Heer (FKH), a think tank promoting the interests of the German military, it says, “the involvement of the JSEC ... in the US exercise Defender” serves the “preparation” of the command for “complete operational capability.”

According to the FKH, the “long-term intent” is the

“creation of a multinational armed forces network” under the leadership of JSEC as the “nucleus of even closer military integration in Europe.” In this way, Germany would “live up to its political aspirations posed in the White Paper 2016 to assume leadership responsibility.”

The “Bundeswehr’s new policy doctrine,” published in August 2018, openly declares that the German army, despite its crimes in two world wars, must again prepare for “very large, high-intensity operations.” “Because of its geographical location,” Germany is a “strategic hub in the centre of Europe and, at the same time, an essential European element of collective defence,” it says. The “capacity to act” of NATO and the EU is based “on Germany’s task fulfilment as a host nation, as a transit country for the transfer of forces to the borders of the Alliance territory and in the rear operational area.”

In addition to the Defender 2020 manoeuvres next year, the NATO exercise “Steadfast Defender” and the multinational deployment exercise “Joint Derby 2020” will also serve to prepare these belligerent objectives. In total, NATO is planning 24 additional preparatory exercises in Europe in the run-up to Defender 2020, as well as monthly cyber combat test runs of the NATO Air Command in Ramstein.

At the centre of the exercises is the constant readiness of all units, especially the special forces, the “Rapid Response Teams” and the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF). The “NATO-Spearhead,” founded in 2014, is being run by the Bundeswehr since January until the end of the year and is aimed directly at Russia. Other “Key Exercises” serve the testing of submarine combat units, air combat systems and logistic military tactics.

The “exercises” completed in recent months were under the auspices of preparation for war against Russia. These included combating underwater mines in the Black Sea under Romanian leadership in March, the increased training of Georgian armed forces, as well as a large-scale demonstration of the Estonian Defence Force and the NATO Enhanced Forward Presence (EFP) in May this year.

Estonian forces also play a key role in NATO’s extensive cyberwar exercises, for example, during the upcoming “cyber coalition” in November, which claims to be “one of the largest cyber defence exercises

in the world.”

The BALTOPS naval exercise in the Baltic Sea, also openly directed against Russia, was led this year for the first time by the Second US Fleet, notorious from the time of the Cold War and which was re-established last year. In June, two submarines and the Spanish aircraft carrier “Juan Carlos I” took part in the annual military action.

The same month, 2,500 NATO troops rehearsed artillery and air defence in Latvia. At the beginning of August, the Russian navy responded with an exercise and a naval parade in St. Petersburg, which included 10,000 soldiers and a nuclear-armed submarine.

Just last month, 50 NATO ships and 3,000 marines from 18 countries, under the command of the Bundeswehr, took part in the Northern Coasts manoeuvres in the western Baltic Sea. It was the “first test run” for the German naval staff DEUMARFOR, which was founded in January. The scenario was a “fictitious Baltic Sea state”—meaning Russia—claiming the Danish island of Bornholm. German mine hunters, a modern “Saxon” frigate for air defence, as well as a Bundeswehr submarine were used.

The gigantic NATO troop manoeuvres in Europe show how far advanced the war preparations of the ruling class already are. Eighty years after the beginning of World War II and the war of extermination of Hitler’s Wehrmacht (army) in the east, the armies of the imperialist powers are marching again in Eastern Europe. In order to avert the danger of a third world war, the working class must unite internationally based on a socialist programme. Only in this way can a disaster be prevented.



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