

# German government expands war operations despite coronavirus pandemic

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7 April 2020

The dramatic spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, which threatens the lives of millions of people worldwide, has done nothing to change German war policy. On the contrary, the ruling class is using the crisis to push ahead with its foreign policy offensive and Germany's return to an aggressive foreign and great power policy.

When Defence Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer (Christian Democratic Union, CDU) announced on Thursday on the ARD morning show the largest deployment of the Bundeswehr (armed forces) at home in post-war German history, she made it clear that the Bundeswehr's foreign missions will also continue unabated. "We must also ensure that the core mission we have, namely alliance and national defence, the provision of external security, but also our international obligations are safeguarded. The missions continued as normal" and "in all missions, in all international areas, our performance is maintained."

Indeed, in recent days, the grand coalition of the Christian Democrats and Social Democrats has extended and expanded numerous war missions in Africa, the Near and Middle East and Central Asia.

On March 25, the Bundestag (federal parliament) decided to "supplement the deployment of armed German forces" in Syria and Iraq. The new mandate provides for Bundeswehr A400M transporters from the Jordanian airbase al-Azraq to continue to refuel the fighter aircraft of the so-called anti-IS coalition. In addition, the transport aircraft are now also to be used for flights to Iraq. In addition, the deployment of air surveillance radar in Iraq is also planned. The training mission of German soldiers in central Iraq is to be placed under the command of NATO rather than the US-led Operation Inherent Resolve.

On March 13, the Bundestag had already extended

the NATO-led "Sea Guardian" military mission in the Mediterranean and the "Resolute Support" mission in Afghanistan by a further year in each case. Above all, the mission in Afghanistan, where thousands of German soldiers have been stationed since 2001, shows the sinister tradition to which German imperialism is returning. On April 2, Kramp-Karrenbauer issued an order of the day for Kunduz province on the tenth anniversary of the so-called "Good Friday Battle," which states:

"These were not the Bundeswehr's first and not the last battles in Afghanistan. But with the events of this day, it became visible for many citizens in Germany for the first time that the soldiers of the Bundeswehr must also kill and can die in combat. For the Bundeswehr, this day illustrates what ultimately defines the profession of the soldier: the ability to survive in battle. And also, the willingness to risk one's own life for the mission that the German Bundestag gives the Bundeswehr."

This is the language of German militarism. Contrary to official propaganda, the Bundeswehr's foreign missions are not about "peace" and "democracy," but defending geostrategic and economic interests with war, annihilation and death.

This also applies to "Sea Guardian" and the naval mission "Irin" off the Libyan coast, which was decided by the EU at the end of March. The missions in the Mediterranean, in which the German armed forces are involved with warships, reconnaissance planes and hundreds of soldiers, serve to seal off Fortress Europe against refugees from the war zones in the Middle East and from Africa and to prepare new neo-colonial incursions on the resource-rich continent.

Last week, the federal government declared its support for an expansion of the French-led war

offensive in the Sahel. A newly formed “task force” would be integrated into the command of Operation Barkhane under the name of “Takuba” and “would be composed mainly of European special units, supported by the main commanders and offering a high degree of autonomy,” according to an official statement by the French Ministry of Defence.

The explicit goal of the offensive is to combine all previous missions, in which Germany is already involved with over a thousand soldiers, into one comprehensive war mission. The new task force will “advise, support and accompany the Malian armed forces in coordination with the G5 Sahel partners, the UN mission (MINUSMA) and the EU missions (EUTM Mali, EUCAP Mali and EUCAP Niger).”

Additional war missions are already being prepared behind the backs of the population. In an interview with the news portal *t-online.de*, Lieutenant General Martin Schelleis, who as territorial commander of the Bundeswehr is leading the “Corona mission” in Germany, emphasised, “Training and basic operations must also be maintained at least to the extent that operational readiness does not suffer in the long term. After all, we do not know where the Bundeswehr might soon be in demand for further foreign deployments as a result of the corona crisis.”

As in Germany itself, the ruling class, especially in the less-developed countries, fears revolutionary uprisings due to the dramatic effects of the coronavirus pandemic.

“The situation is dramatic, because with a delay of two months, the virus is now arriving in developing and emerging countries,” warned Development Minister Gerd Müller at the weekend in an interview with the *Augsburger Allgemeine* newspaper. In Mali, “with its 18 million people,” he said, “there are only four ventilators.” And “the economic consequences of the worldwide corona shock” are already leading “in many countries to mass unemployment. The structures are collapsing.” He “is very concerned that unrest will break out in fragile states, including civil wars. The impact on us would be incalculable.”

Instead of respirators and medical equipment, Germany and the other imperialist powers are sending weapons and soldiers to oppress the impoverished masses. In return, the astronomical sums already spent on armaments and war will be further increased. Last

Thursday, before a NATO meeting, Foreign Minister Heiko Maas (Social Democratic Party, SPD) reiterated his commitment to the military alliance’s 2 percent of GDP spending target. “As far as the two percent target is concerned, what we have said so far applies. We have increased our defence spending by 45 percent since 2014 according to NATO criteria,” he boasted. “We also stand by our commitments and we prove it every day.”



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