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NATO, Germany build up for war against Russia

The defence ministers of all NATO member states met in Brussels on June 7 and decided to take all necessary steps over the next two years to be able mobilise a total of 90 military, naval and air force combat units at short notice and at any time.

To this end, two new headquarters will be built, with one of them located in Norfolk, Virginia. According to the US Defence Department, the Norfolk centre will organise the rapid deployment of combat units across the Atlantic, so that the “entire spectrum of transatlantic missions” can be successfully carried out.

“The return of the major powers and a resurgent Russia demand that NATO focus on the Atlantic to ensure a capable and credible deterrent,” Pentagon spokesman Johnny Michael declared in early May. The new NATO command will be “the linchpin of transatlantic security.”

The second new Joint Support Enabling Command (JSEC) will be built in Ulm, Germany, following a proposal made by the German Defence Minister Ursula von der Leyen.

“It will be a new NATO command tasked with coordinating all military troop movements within Alliance territory in the event of a crisis,” von der Leyen said at the NATO defence ministers’ meeting in Brussels. The construction of the new command is to be based on the Multinational Command Operational Command operating in Ulm. This unique centre is already carrying out NATO, UN and EU tasks and, according to the German army (Bundeswehr), has already begun preparations for the JSEC.

The JSEC should reach full operational readiness by 2021. Already by 2020, 90 units from all three military branches (army, navy, air force) are to be upgraded so that in case of emergency they can be sent into action within 30 days.

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg announced that 30 army battalions (30,000 troops) would be available for this purpose. In addition, 30 aircraft squadrons, and 30 large warships as well as submarines should be able to mobilise within “30 days or less.” In the future, these units will strengthen the already existing NATO Response Force (NRF). Up to now, the NRF has consisted of 20,000 rapid deployment troops and a reserve pool of another 20 battalions. In addition, Stoltenberg announced an increase in the number of positions in NATO’s multinational planning and management staff from its existing level of 1,200 to 8,000.

The German army has made no secret of the fact that this massive rearmament is aimed at preparing for a major war. “This is basically about preparing for intervention,” von der Leyen said. It must be possible “to keep troops in high operational readiness, so that they can be deployed quickly.”

According to a report from the army command, “In the event of an attack on an ally, the Command Center will be responsible for troop and material transports within Europe and coordinate their protection. Already on the way to the operational area and well in advance, planning can be centralised and the tasks of protection harmonised.

“The possible area for intervention extends to the area of responsibility of SACEUR [Supreme Commander of NATO in Europe], ranging from Greenland to Africa, Europe and its coastal waters.”

The preparations for war are specifically directed against Russia, a nuclear power. Just a few days before the meeting of NATO defence ministers, the European Commission announced that it would invest 6.5 billion euros to build new roads in Europe by 2027 to enable troop-carriers and military vehicles to reach the Baltic countries at short notice. Currently bridges and rail networks are often not designed for the heavyweight tracked vehicles.

The preparations for war in Eastern Europe are already in full swing with Germany playing a key role. It is already central to the strengthened NATO presence in Lithuania, with 4,000 soldiers on the eastern border of the NATO. In addition, the Bundeswehr will take over leadership of the “NATO Spearhead” VJTF (Very High Readiness Joint Task Force) in 2019 and 2023.

Since May there have been large transfers of NATO forces through Germany to Eastern Europe, which will continue until the end of June. As part of the operation “Atlantic Resolve III,” 3,500 US soldiers and about 1,400 vehicles, plus supplies, are to be transferred to Poland and the Baltic states. In addition, massive exercises are already underway with German participation.

The NATO exercise “Saber Strike” is currently taking place in Lithuania, with the Bundeswehr leading the eastern flank reinforcement. According to the US Army, about 18,000 soldiers from 19 countries are taking part in the exercise. Among other things, the operation includes the simulated storming of the Russian Kaliningrad exclave through the Suwalki gap between Lithuania and Poland. The Bundeswehr is participating in NATO exercises this year with about 12,000 troops, a tripling of its commitment compared to last year.

Under conditions of growing conflicts between the NATO powers themselves, the German Defence Ministry sees the NATO offensive against Russia as a means of increasing its own military clout. The leadership of the VJTF must “invest and modernise certain units to bring them up to their best,” von der Leyen said. This will be high up on the agenda for the upcoming NATO summit in July.