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German government deploys more combat troops to Lithuania against Russia

Amid the US-led war drive against Russia, which poses the threat of World War III, Germany is increasing its contingent of combat troops in Eastern Europe. During a visit to the military in Munster on Monday, Defense Minister Christine Lambrecht (Social Democrats, SPD) announced that Parliament had been informed “that we will strengthen the battlegroup in Lithuania.”

The reinforcements include “350 soldiers who can be deployed within a few days, 270 of them from the German army.” She agreed on this in recent days with Lithuanian Defense Minister Arvydas Anušauskas and Chancellor Olaf Scholz (SPD). “We are thus strengthening our contribution to NATO’s eastern flank and sending a very clear signal of unity to our alliance partners. You can rely on us,” she added.

At a joint public appearance with the heads of state of the three Baltic states, Scholz confirmed on Thursday evening that the number of German troops in Lithuania would be increased by 350. “We take the concerns of our allies very seriously. We stand with you. That's very important to me,” he said.



German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, center left, during a news conference Feb. 10 with Lithuanian President Gitanas Nauseda, left, Estonian Prime Minister Kaja Kallas and Latvian Prime Minister Karins, right (Christophe Gateau/Pool via AP)

The three Baltic heads of state and government praised Berlin's decision. "It is crucial that we strengthen NATO's eastern flank," said Lithuanian President Gitanas Nauseda. "Our alliance must be able to respond quickly and respond decisively in the region." The soldiers are "an additional reinforcement."

The troops are currently on their way. "The eFP [enhanced Forward Presence] reinforcement forces have just been deployed," the Defense Ministry announced in a tweet.

According to an official report by the ministry, the troops consist "mainly of reconnaissance, artillery and nuclear, biological and chemical defense capabilities that are available in Germany." It was "a moderate reinforcement with a sense of proportion to reassure the allies and should enable de-escalation."

This claim is preposterous. In fact, the massive build-up of NATO troops in Eastern Europe is taking the form of preparations for war against Russia more and more directly. Numerous other NATO members have announced an increase in their troops in Eastern Europe in the past few days, some of which have already been completed.

Several thousand US paratroopers from the 82nd Airborne Division are currently being deployed to south-eastern Poland, near the borders with Belarus and Ukraine. According to the Pentagon, they will be conducting parachute jumps there in the coming days. Hundreds more US soldiers arrived in Romania on Wednesday after being transferred from a base in Germany.

Britain, which leads the NATO battle group in Estonia, announced it would double its troops in Eastern Europe. Among other moves, 350 Royal Marines are to be relocated to Poland as an “immediate measure.” According to a report in the *Times*, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson was “Ready to go further,” and consider “deploying Typhoons [fighter jets] and warships to south-eastern Europe.” There are “plans for sending fighter jets to Romania and Bulgaria and for sending warships to the Black Sea,” the paper said.

NATO had already announced in January that France, Spain, Denmark and the Netherlands would also send more combat aircraft and warships to the Baltic Sea and Eastern Europe. Paris is also investigating the establishment of another NATO battle group in Romania.

The massive deployment of troops is accompanied by constant military exercises near the Russian border. On February 20, the anti-submarine exercise “Dynamic Manta 22” will start in the Mediterranean Sea. On February 22, the exercise “Dynamic Guard” will commence in Norway. Both will merge into Cold Response 2022, the largest military maneuver in Norway since the 1980s. 35,000 soldiers from 28 countries, including Germany, will take part in the exercise, which will officially take place from March 14 to April 1. British aircraft carrier HMS Prince of Wales and US aircraft carrier Harry S. Truman are reportedly already en route.

The offensive refutes the official propaganda claim that Russia is the aggressor. In fact, the NATO powers have been systematically encircling Russia since the dissolution of the Soviet Union 30 years ago. In Ukraine, the US and Germany, in close cooperation with fascist forces, orchestrated a coup in early 2014 to install a right-wing, pro-Western regime in Kiev. Since then, the imperialist powers have continued to escalate the conflict.

The already existing “Battlegroups” in the Baltic States and Poland were set up in 2017 and are armed to the teeth.



German tanks arriving at Sestokai station, Lithuania, Feb. 24, 2017, for the deployment of the German-led NATO battlegroup (AP Photo/Mindaugas Kulbis)

“The core of the Battlegroup itself consists of mechanized and infantry forces” that “can be reinforced by additional units such as special engineers or artillery,” according to one brochure published by the German Army Operations Command. “The Battlegroup is equipped with a significant number of large vehicles, including several dozen tanks (battle tanks, armoured recovery vehicles, tankdozers, bridge-laying tanks, and armoured personnel carriers),” although the army “mainly uses battle tanks, armored personnel carriers and transporters.”

On Wednesday, the new commander of the German troops in Rukla, Lithuania, Lieutenant Colonel Daniel Andrä, officially took over the leadership of the Battlegroup. Bundeswehr Inspector General Eberhard Zorn and Army Inspector Alfons Mais were also present at the handover. Together with other German generals, including Jörg Vollmer, commander of the NATO Joint Force Command Brunssum, and the Lithuanian Defense Minister, they celebrated the fifth anniversary of the Battlegroup.

The aggressive behavior of the German military command in Eastern Europe and the formation of German combat troops against Russia have a dark and unpleasant history: 81 years ago, the Wehrmacht invaded the Soviet Union and swept across Eastern Europe in a war of annihilation that claimed at least 27 million lives.

Even today, the imperialist powers are pursuing the goal of subjugating the resource-rich country and reducing it to a semi-colonial status. In their military deployment in the east, the NATO powers not only rely on fascist forces in Ukraine, but also within their own ranks.

Significantly, the public prosecutor's office in Lüneburg, Lower Saxony, opened investigations on Wednesday of German soldiers who were previously stationed in Lithuania. According to the public prosecutor's office, two soldiers are charged with incitement to hatred. They are said to have made racist and anti-Semitic comments and denied the Holocaust.

This is not an isolated issue. Extensive right-wing extremist networks exist in the German army, which are systematically protected and used by the ruling class to enforce the return of German militarism at home and abroad. In the summer of 2021, an entire platoon of tank grenadiers was ordered back to Germany from Lithuania after several soldiers carried out right-wing extremist and anti-Semitic activities.

In Rukla, the German-led Battlegroup commands the Lithuanian “Iron Wolf” Brigade, which has a right-wing extremist history. Originally, the Iron Wolf (Geležinis vilkas) was a fascist combat league founded in 1927 under the dictator Antanas Smetona. During World War II, members of the Iron Wolf collaborated with the Nazis and participated in massacres of the Jewish population in Lithuania.

Nevertheless, the NATO war drive is being pushed in particular by the nominally “left” parties in the German parliament. While the Social Democratic Minister of Defense is sending additional troops to the east, Green Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock is fronting the propaganda offensive on the ground. As part of her inaugural visit to Ukraine earlier this week, she was photographed in a steel helmet and bulletproof vest surrounded by armed Ukrainian soldiers on the eastern Ukrainian front line to attract media attention.

The Left Party, which backed government propaganda during the 2014 coup in Ukraine, is also fully on board with the drive to war. Left Party parliamentary group leader Dietmar Bartsch said on the Anne Will talk show that he was “fully with the federal government,” which “tries everything in dialogue formats” and “de-escalates.” And of course it is “right

to put a lot of things on the table.” Like the federal government, he considers arms deliveries to Kiev to be wrong, because we can “really help Ukraine in a different way.”

In fact, the “dialogue formats” praised by Bartsch serve de-escalation just as little as the deployment of troops. They serve to convey to Russia NATO’s capitulation demands, which are also supported by the Left Party. The United States responded “very solidly” to the Russian demands, Bartsch claimed. He could hardly make clearer where he stands. The “solid” US-NATO response is obviously to prepare for war.

The danger of war is enormous and the Putin regime is increasing it with its own military maneuvers. It does not represent the interests of working people in Russia, but those of a corrupt oligarchy, which has enriched itself enormously since the Stalinist bureaucracy reinstated capitalism. The only way to avert the threat of World War III is to build an international anti-war movement, based on the working class and fighting for the overthrow of capitalism, and a socialist perspective.

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