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European Languages

زبانهای اروپایی

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23.03.2022

Germany deploys more combat troops to Eastern Europe

With the Russian invasion of Ukraine serving as the pretext, Germany is sending additional combat troops to Eastern Europe as part of a comprehensive NATO buildup. The danger of a full-scale imperialist war against Russia thus continues to grow.

Last Wednesday, an extraordinary meeting of NATO defence ministers in Brussels decided on a “long-term strengthening of the eastern flank” of the military alliance. At the same time, Germany’s Bundeswehr (Armed Forces) began moving anti-aircraft missiles to Slovakia, the exact number and location of which has not been disclosed. A new NATO battlegroup is to be established in the country under German leadership.



German Chancellor Olaf Scholz , right, gets informations during a visit to the Bundeswehr Operations Command in Schwielowsee, Germany, March 4, 2022. (Clemens Bilan/Pool via AP)

Defence Minister Christine Lambrecht (Social Democratic Party, SPD) spoke to the press of a “dramatically worsened security situation” that required a “credible deterrent” and “rapid reaction capability.” Addressing Russia, she threatened, “We Germans clearly stand by Article Five.” Any incursions into Alliance territory would have “catastrophic consequences” for the Russian government and country.

On Tuesday, by a large majority, the Slovakian parliament had given the green light for a massive expansion of the NATO presence in the country. Up to 2,100 NATO soldiers, including 700 from the Bundeswehr, are to be stationed in Slovakia, which borders western Ukraine. In addition to the German troops, who make up the largest contingent, another 600 soldiers are expected from the Czech Republic, 400 from the United States, 200 from the Netherlands and 100 each from Poland and Slovenia.

The US Patriot system plays a central role in the strategic calculations of all NATO frontline states, as it can engage enemy aircraft and cruise missiles and enemy tactical ballistic missiles. The Patriot guided missile systems create a mobile “protective dome” in which their own forces can operate unhindered. A Bundeswehr fact sheet speaks of an “enormous range of up to 68 kilometres” and states that up to five targets can be engaged simultaneously.

Germany’s troop deployments to Slovakia are part of an immense military build-up by the Western military alliance against Russia. Under the umbrella of NATO’s Enhanced Vigilance Activities (eVA) initiative, they serve to build up rotating multinational combat units like those already established in the Baltic states and Poland during the Enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) initiative after 2016.

The existing eFP battlegroups are regarded as a provocation by Russia, as they are tantamount to a permanent stationing of operational combat forces in Eastern Europe, in contradiction to the NATO-Russia Founding Act of 1997. In Lithuania, the battlegroup established in 2017—which is also under German command—corresponds to a deployment of 1,200 soldiers and includes, among other things, armoured infantry and

anti-aircraft guns. It was reinforced in February by a further 350 Bundeswehr soldiers from the artillery, reconnaissance and NBC defence sectors.

Now, under the leadership of the Bundeswehr, such a battlegroup is also being established in Slovakia. Slovak Defence Minister Jaroslav Nad, who belongs to the right-wing “protest party” OĽaNO, hailed the deployment of NATO troops as the “biggest step in the defence of Slovakia since its independence.” Germany’s Defence Minister Lambrecht declared that they were ready to “increase our commitment as well.”

During the eVA, a battlegroup under French leadership has already been established in Romania. Among others, the German and Italian Air Forces as well as the British Royal Air Force are participating in the Romanian NATO mission Enhanced Air Policing South. Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine at the end of February, Lambrecht had immediately arranged for the German contribution to the mission to be doubled. A total of six Eurofighters from Tactical Air Wing 74 will continue to guard NATO airspace in southeastern Europe until at least the end of the month.

In addition, according to the Bundeswehr, a German A400M tanker aircraft left the Jordanian airbase in Al-Asrak on Monday to be used “temporarily” for air refuelling missions “on NATO’s eastern flank.” Until now, the Bundeswehr tanker had been supplying fighter jets of the anti-ISIS coalition in its air strikes against Iraqi and Syrian targets in international airspace for years.

Subsequent troop deployments are already being prepared. According to the German Ministry of Defence, the meeting of NATO ministers served, among other things, to make “long-term, strategic adjustments to the alliance’s deterrence and defence capabilities on its eastern flank.” In a “special format” consisting of “like-minded states,” the defence ministers of the European Union as well as Finland, Georgia, Sweden and Ukraine discussed a “further build-up of capabilities” in Eastern Europe.

The resulting “readjustment of the strategic orientation of the Alliance’s capabilities” would, “alongside the decision on the NATO Strategic Concept 2022,” be the central topic of the NATO Summit of Heads of State and Government to be held in Madrid at the end of June.

Lambrecht stressed in Brussels that the “further military reinforcement of NATO forces on the eastern flank” must be characterised by strategic “staying power” in order to counter Russia for months. In other words, the German ruling class, which waged a war of extermination against the Soviet Union in World War II, now sees itself as at war with Russia again and is arming itself accordingly.

Only hours before Lambrecht announced the troop deployments to Slovakia, the German cabinet—comprising the SPD, Greens and Liberal Democrats (FDP)—officially decided to allocate a gigantic Bundeswehr special fund of 100 billion euros. This is the largest German rearmament drive since the fall of the Nazi dictatorship. The first item to be announced was the procurement of 15 Eurofighter fighter jets and up to 35 US stealth bombers, and new acquisition plans have been leaking out every day since.

For example, aviation magazine *Flug Revue* reported on Friday that the Bundeswehr has commissioned the Polaris aerospace company to build and flight test a demonstrator of the “Aurora” hypersonic system. According to the manufacturer, the reusable multi-purpose space plane will be able to be used for a wide variety of “defence-related mission scenarios,” including “suborbital/hypersonic missions” with “payload capacities of several tonnes.”

World Socialist 22.03.2022