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German army assumes leadership of military buildup against Russia

By Christoph Vandreier
30 April 2016

Seventy-five years after the June 22, 1941 attack by Germany on the Soviet Union, which resulted in the deaths of some 40 million Soviet citizens, the German government is planning to establish command structures and permanently station German Army (Bundeswehr) soldiers on Russia's borders.

The *Süddeutsche Zeitung* reported Thursday on German government plans to deploy troops to Lithuania. An entire NATO battalion could be stationed in the country under German command, according to the report. Similar initiatives by the NATO military alliance are planned in other Eastern European NATO member-states.

A government spokesman told the newspaper that several allies were currently considering "stronger engagement as part of the reassurance of Eastern alliance partners and collective defence." This review was taking account of "the relevant changes in the European security situation, particularly the security needs of Poland and the Baltic states."

According to *Spiegel Online*, German Chancellor Angela Merkel already agreed to German participation in the planned NATO operation at the G5 meeting last Monday. Prior to this, US President Barack Obama urged Germany and Britain to increase their military engagement against Russia.

Spiegel Online also reported that in Poland, the Baltic states and Romania, NATO battalions of up to 1,000 soldiers would be stationed. The Bundeswehr could be involved, contributing a company of 150 to 200 soldiers.

If these plans are implemented, permanent command structures of the Western NATO states will be installed on the Russian border for the first time. Thus far, the imperialist powers have restricted themselves to temporarily sending troops to Eastern European countries to carry out exercises.

Such plans would breach the NATO-Russia agreement of 1997, under which NATO excluded the stationing of “additional substantial combat forces permanently” in the former Warsaw Pact states. This is not changed by the fact that the troops involved in the proposed action will rotate, a device obviously intended to avoid having to officially repudiate the agreement.

The offensive operation is to be approved at the upcoming NATO summit in Warsaw in July, according to the German Defence Ministry. Other discussions will be held on how NATO forces can be positioned more effectively against Russia.

The president of the German Federal Academy for Security Policy, Karl-Heinz Kamp, wrote in a working paper for the summit that the meeting needed to close “NATO’s repeatedly defined capability gaps” in Eastern Europe. In particular, the reaction time of the forces had to be improved. The rapid reaction force composed of “less than 5,000 men” was “in a serious situation no match” for the Russian forces.

Faced with a confrontation with Russia, Kamp recommended “a new nuclear strategic consensus” by the alliance. While Russia was inferior when it came to conventional weapons, it would be harder to deter the country with nuclear weapons, “where the danger of a nuclear rapid reaction from the Russian command always exists.” It was necessary to abandon the idea of a nuclear-free world, according to Kamp, and instead invest in rapid response American nuclear bombs, as well as strengthening “exercise activities in the nuclear sector.”

The Federal Academy is directly subordinated to the federal Security Council. If Kamp, as the Academy’s president, is demanding a nuclear weapons buildup, this must reflect discussions within the most senior ruling circles of the country. The German government’s plans are connected to such discussions and represent an enormous escalation of the confrontation with Russia, with incalculable consequences.

The proposals are in line with the demands raised in recent weeks by the designated NATO supreme commander for Europe, Curtis Scaparrotti. “We should confront them and make clear what is, and what is not acceptable,” the general said. “If we have made that clear, we also have to implement it.”

These plans are the culmination of a strategy NATO has been pursuing for some years. Germany and the United States played a central role in this from the outset. They first backed the 2014 coup in Ukraine, which aimed to break Russian influence over the country and bring it under Western control.

In the same year, NATO agreed at its summit in Wales to establish a “Very Rapid Reaction Force” (VJTF) of 5,000 men, which was to be ready to deploy against Russia at short notice. Germany intends to provide more than half of the soldiers for the unit. Together with the planned stationing of troops in Eastern Europe, 10,000 soldiers will be prepared to intervene against Russia, including some 3,000 from Germany.

The West’s aggression has brought the world to the brink of a third world war. Serious incidents between Russian and NATO forces are already taking place that could culminate in an all-out conflict. On 12 April, Russia sent a fighter jet and helicopter to intercept an American destroyer carrying out exercises in the Baltic Sea near Kaliningrad.

On Wednesday, joint exercises between the Estonian armed forces and American troops stationed in the country began. Among other things, they included “sudden mobilisation” rehearsals. NATO and American military experts have also arrived in Georgia to prepare joint exercises. In this year as a whole, 21 exercises involving a total of 5,500 soldiers are planned or have already taken place.

The conflict in eastern Ukraine, where pro-Russian separatists are fighting against government troops, has flared up once again. On Thursday, the head of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe observer mission, Ertugrul Apakan, reported “the highest number of violations in months.” Heavy weaponry had been used. Scaparrotti previously demanded that weapons be supplied to the Ukrainian government to support them in their fight with the separatists.