

EU establishes military headquarters

By Johannes Stern
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In the run-up to this week's Euro summit, EU foreign and defence ministers agreed to set up a joint command centre for military operations. The move is part of a plan by the EU to develop a foreign and security policy independent of NATO and the United States.

The headquarters is expected to begin operations in March and be fully operational in June. The training of EU armed forces in Mali, Somalia and Central Africa will then begin under the control of the new planning and leadership centre. In the medium term, the headquarters will also oversee "executive" EU military deployments—i.e., comprehensive war operations, such as in Syria or Iraq, which up to now have been led by headquarters in the respective EU member states.

Officially, the European Union designates the new command centre as "military planning and leadership capabilities" rather than as a "military headquarters." According to *Der Spiegel* this is due to "the resistance against the construction of a European army in the still current EU member Great Britain, as well as other capital cities, which primarily rely on NATO or, like Austria, are neutral."

But this is precisely the point of the new centre—the gradual creation of a European army dominated by Germany, which can wage war independently of NATO.

The new command centre is a "great step towards a common defence and security policy," said German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel (SPD), while Defence Minister Ursula von der Leyen (CDU) applauded a step "that has been tried and failed for many years." European security and defence policy had been put to one side for too long. Now, however, the EU was "on the right path."

The European military offensive is currently being advanced first and foremost by France and Germany. According to a report by the German Defence Ministry, the decision "goes back to a Franco-German

initiative." Von der Leyen and her French colleague, Jean-Yves Le Drian, had already "implemented measures for a renewal of the Common Security and Defence Policy (GVSP) last year, including the notion of a "headquarters" to create a "permanent military planning and implementation capacity."

The *World Socialist Web Site* reported extensively on the common military policy paper at the time, warning that Paris and Berlin were seeking to use the exit of Great Britain from the European Union to press ahead with an independent European military and great-power policy.

At the beginning of the six-page document, "Renewal of the GVSP: Towards a comprehensive, realistic and credible defence in the EU," Von der Leyen and Le Drian referred to the "new EU Global Strategy for Foreign and Security Policy (EUGS)", which was presented by EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini at the first EU summit after the Brexit referendum in July 2016.

The transformation of the EU into a military union was at the centre of Mogherini's paper, which was developed in tandem to the German White Paper in the spring of 2016 and bears the hallmark of Berlin. NATO is to protect its members from hostile attacks, according to the Global Strategy, but Europeans must be "better equipped, trained and organized to make a decisive contribution to this collective task and, if necessary, act autonomously."

Under conditions of the deepest social and political crisis in Europe since the end of the Second World War and growing conflicts with the US following the election of Donald Trump, Berlin and Paris are pressing ahead with the militarization of the continent.

In an interview on Monday, the outgoing French President, François Hollande, urged Europe to build up its defence capacity: "On the one hand this would

ensure its own security, but on the other it allows it to act in the world, to seek solutions to conflicts that threaten it.”

A recent strategy paper of the German Society for Foreign Affairs (DGAP) states: “The military is once more gaining importance for world politics. Without the ability to limit massive violence, states cannot tackle non-military security problems.” Germany “has committed itself to a pioneering role” and is driving ahead with “the Europeanisation of defence structures.” Berlin should now set up a ‘European Division,’ of around 20,000 soldiers, in stages by 2020, and at the same time offer participation to its European partners.”

The strategy of German imperialism to establish the Bundeswehr as a so-called “Anchor Army” for European NATO states, and then subordinate the latter to the command structures of the Bundeswehr was previously formulated by von der Leyen in a publication for the Munich Security Conference.

The ruling class in Germany is preparing to deploy military means to defend its economic and geostrategic interests all over the world—including against its main ally of the post-war period, the US. At the same time, the aggressive policy of Berlin is aggravating tensions between the European powers and increases the danger of war in Europe itself.

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