

German government backs Trump's military escalation in Afghanistan

By Johannes Stern
24 August 2017

The same German politicians and media outlets that issued hypocritical criticisms of President Donald Trump's response to the fascist rampage in Charlottesville are now fully behind his escalation of the war in Afghanistan.

Immediately after the US president proclaimed in a militarist speech Monday evening at the Fort Myer military base in Arlington, Virginia, that the number of troops in Afghanistan would be increased and the so-called war on terror massively expanded, the German government gave its firm backing to the decision.

During a visit to soldiers at a base in Eckernförde, Defence Minister Ursula Von der Leyen (Christian Democratic Union, CDU) declared on Tuesday, "We welcome the US decision to consolidate its deployment and engagement in Afghanistan." It was to be welcomed that "decisions about which steps to take next will be conditions-dependent, rather than being dependent upon domestic electoral calendars."

Von der Leyen did not exclude sending additional German troops. Responding to a journalist's question, she noted that Germany was the second-largest troop contributor after the United States and that it had special responsibility for the north of Afghanistan.

However, she continued, last year, as other military forces were reduced, the German army increased its force by 18 percent. The view was therefore that Germany "is not now in the first rank of those who are being asked for additional troops."

The Social Democratic Party (SPD)-led foreign ministry also backed Trump's decision. "It is good that the US will continue its substantial engagement in Afghanistan. Despite strenuous efforts by the international community, the preconditions for an Afghanistan without international support have yet to

be achieved," stated a spokesperson for the foreign ministry.

Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel (SPD) stated, "It is now important for the Americans to discuss with us Europeans how we can jointly ensure that the country becomes more peaceful and secure, and people from Afghanistan no longer need to flee here. We expect Washington to consult closely with Europeans on its actions. Further migration does not only destabilise Afghanistan, but also Europe."

Trump's offensive was also welcomed by the media. "It is right that Trump, on the insistence of his military advisers, has now decided to deploy several thousand more soldiers to Afghanistan to stabilise the situation, and give the Afghan government and armed forces more time to work towards a political solution of the conflict," the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ) commented.

However, this was merely "an initial acknowledgement that the withdrawal of international troops took place too soon and was oriented towards the American electoral calendar rather than conditions on the ground."

FAZ author Friederike Böge expressed disappointment that Trump's change of course did not come sooner. "Over recent months, the lack of an American strategy and clear engagement in Afghanistan worsened the situation still further. This encouraged the Taliban and led to countries like Russia and Iran becoming increasingly active to fill the vacuum that emerged," she wrote. With Trump's "announcement of an increase in troop levels, this downward spiral will at least likely be stopped."

The *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (SZ) sought to prepare its readers for new combat operations and higher levels of German troops in a lengthy article entitled "The long

road to peace,” which reported about the activities of German Brigadier General Andre Bodemann in northern Afghanistan.

“If Bodemann were to take away one lesson, it is not likely to be a popular one at home,” the *SZ* wrote. He believes that the current upper limit of 980 German troops is “at present unfortunately inadequate to advise as intensively as I would like. We have to reach the lower commanding levels, including into the battalions.” But this is not possible under the German mandate, he added. An internal study by NATO’s Resolute Support mission also found that “significantly more advisers are necessary.”

Trump’s speech at Fort Myer exposed the true character of the Afghanistan war. It was a fascistic declaration of death and destruction. “We will not say when we will attack. But we will attack,” said the president. The “murderers” had to know that there was no safe haven for them; that America could target them anywhere. “We are fighting to win,” he added. America is no longer engaged in “nation building,” but is “killing terrorists.”

The German ruling elite’s response to Trump’s declaration of violence comes as no surprise. The German army has not been involved in “nation building” in Afghanistan either, never mind fighting for “democracy” or “human rights.” In reality, German troops have fought a brutal neocolonial war of occupation alongside their American counterparts from the outset. The initial stage was the battle for Tora Bora in December 2001, in which German special commandos participated. In the north, where there is still a German presence today, the first offensive military operation under German command since World War II took place with Operation Harecate Yolo in the autumn of 2007.

But the horrific highpoint of Germany’s intervention was unquestionably the attack on two petrol tankers ordered by Colonel Georg Klein, then German army commander in Kunduz, on September 4, 2009. According to official NATO figures, at least 142 people were killed or injured in the “massacre of Kunduz,” including many women and children. This is by far the largest number of victims to date in an operation by the Bundeswehr, Germany’s army established after the Second World War, as well as by NATO troops in Afghanistan.

The crimes now being prepared behind the backs of the population were outlined by Berlin-based historian Jörg Baberowski, when he said of fighting non-state actors like the Taliban, “And if one is not willing to take hostages, burn villages, hang people and spread fear and terror, as the terrorists do, if one is not prepared to do such things, then one can never win such a conflict. Then it is better to keep out altogether.”

With its resort to imperialist violence, Germany’s ruling elite is pursuing the same goals as it did under the Kaiser and the Nazis. A 2013 paper by the Ministry for Development on the German-Afghan dialogue on raw materials stated, “In less than twenty years, Afghanistan could be one of the most significant international suppliers of strategically important raw materials (including ‘rare earth elements’, tantalum, lithium, tungsten, iron, copper, lead, zinc, etc.). The latest investigative results presented by the US Geological Survey (USGS) confirm impressively the previous assumptions and projections about the substantial deposits of raw materials.”

The divisions between the imperialist powers, particularly between Germany and the US, have since sharpened dramatically. However, as long as Berlin and the European powers are incapable of plundering the resource-rich and strategically important Central Asian region without Washington’s support, they are dependent upon US military might. This is the dirty secret about the German government’s alliance with Donald Trump in Afghanistan.

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