

# German defence minister visits troops in Jordan and Iraq

By Johannes Stern  
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The new German Defence Minister, Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, completed her first overseas troop visit recently. She met with Bundeswehr (Armed Forces) soldiers in Jordan and Iraq. The message was the same everywhere: The German army should continue and even expand its operations in the geo-strategically important and resource-rich Middle East, even after the previous mandate expires on October 31.

At the military base in Taji, near Baghdad, where the Bundeswehr trains Iraqi soldiers, Kramp-Karrenbauer said that “the unanimous message of the entire Iraqi side,” besides giving “thanks for the mission so far,” was “clearly the desire ... that this commitment will continue.” In addition, there was also “the request to consider whether this commitment can be strengthened.”

Clearly, the German government is secretly preparing massive arms deliveries to the Iraqi army. Responding to a journalist’s question about what was meant by “increased engagement,” Kramp-Karrenbauer responded, “Apart from aerial reconnaissance, we are above all committed to the question of how to help people help themselves, how to empower them. Of course, the Iraqi side also has wishes, as far as equipment is concerned.” Since this was “always a very sensitive topic” in Germany, it would also be “examined very intensively.”

Under the guise of fighting terrorism, the German government is pursuing the goal of harnessing the Iraqi army and the Kurdish *Peshmerga* in northern Iraq as proxy troops and stooges for its own imperialist interests.

“In the longer term, you have to be prepared to fight terror on all levels,” said Kramp-Karrenbauer on Wednesday in a live interview with broadcaster ARD

from Erbil, the capital of the Kurdistan region of northern Iraq. Above all, it was about “enabling the security forces here in Iraq” to “construct the appropriate structures so that civil society can work together with the military authorities.” In the long term, it was about “the stabilization of Iraq and thus the stabilization of this region. And that is in our very own interests.”

Kramp-Karrenbauer’s attempt to depict the deployment of the Bundeswehr as an “anti-terrorist operation” against the so-called Islamic State (IS) is time-worn propaganda. Everyone knows that the illegal US attack under George W. Bush in 2003 is the real reason for the disintegration of Iraq. The IS was the product of the subsequent occupation of the country and the cooperation of the NATO powers with Islamist militias in the wars for regime-change in Libya and Syria.

While the German government had held back in the wars against Iraq and Libya, it was involved militarily in the Syria war from the outset. Last year, it also extended its efforts to the whole of Iraq. In this, the German army has used terrorist methods directly or indirectly.

For example, the German-trained and armed Kurdish *Peshmerga* militias and units of the official Iraqi army killed tens of thousands of civilians during the so-called liberation of Mosul from ISIS. The German *Luftwaffe* (Air Force) provided target coordinates for the bombing and artillery barrages by the US-led anti-IS coalition that eradicated entire cities and villages in Syria and Iraq.

The “innate interests” of Germany in the region, as named by Kramp-Karrenbauer, are clearly outlined in previous and current strategy papers. As already stated in a 2001 study by the CDU-affiliated Konrad

Adenauer Foundation titled, “Germany and the Middle East: Positioning and Recommendations for Action,” the German interest is “primarily aimed at stabilizing the affected states and societies to prevent danger to their own security and those of the European partner countries, to ensure a smooth supply of raw materials and to create export opportunities for the German economy.”

The importance of the “export markets of the region’s core states” for the German economy was enormous. It was therefore important “to make a contribution to safeguarding the sales markets, to ensure as unhindered market access as possible and to face the competition of the USA, the Eastern European countries, but also the East Asian industrialized countries.”

The same imperialist interests are behind the plans for a possible European naval mission in the Persian Gulf, which is being actively promoted by Berlin. A strategy paper published by the German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP) a few days ago states, “The unhindered use of transport, supply and trade lines as well as the security of raw materials and energy supplies are among the foreign and security policy priorities of export-dependent nations like Germany.”

Germany should therefore “develop a mission to preserve its own foreign policy design claims and safeguard its interests and lead them if necessary.” The EU navies had “sufficient resources to carry out both an observer mission and a protective mission.” Germany and the EU “should strive to attract non-EU states, such as Norway, Canada, Australia or New Zealand.”

Although, 80 years after the start of the Second World War and 30 years after German reunification, the German ruling class is again moving towards developing an independent policy of war and great-power politics, there is no opposition to this among the establishment parties. On the contrary, the return of German militarism is supported and actively promoted by all the parties in the Bundestag (parliament).

Kramp-Karrenbauer is herself chair of the ruling Christian Democratic Union (CDU) of Chancellor Angela Merkel. Social Democratic Party (SPD) defence spokeswoman Sientje Möller, who accompanied Kramp-Karrenbauer on her visit to see

the army, hinted in an interview with broadcaster Deutschlandfunk that the Social Democrats, too, are ready to support the German defence minister’s initiative.

“We are gathering on-the-spot arguments that we can bring to the parliamentary group speaking for or against [a mandate extension].” Möller had already visited Iraq last year and was “very convinced” of the work of the Bundeswehr. A presentation on the “militarily meaningful” use of German tornadoes from the Jordanian Air Force Base Al-Azraq also “impressed” her.

The Greens are among the most aggressive advocates of a German-European military mission in the Persian Gulf, which could turn the whole region into a conflagration and massively increase the danger of direct confrontation between the major powers and a third world war. There was an “independent European interest in the Iran conflict,” Green Party Chairman Robert Habeck recently said in an interview with the *Passauer Neue Presse*. “Europe could no longer rely on others to represent its interests. It must become capable of conducting world politics.”

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