

Germany: World Arms Merchant In First Post-WW II Combat

By [Rick Rozoff](#)

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Earlier this week German soldiers under NATO command shot to death two Afghan civilians and seriously injured two more in the north of the nation.

During the past ten days German troops in NATO's Rapid Reaction Force have been conducting a major combat operation in Afghanistan's Kunduz Province.

300 German soldiers in charge of an estimated 1,200 Afghan government troops launched an offensive with the use of armor and artillery, including Marder infantry tanks and mortars.

A Bundeswehr soldier was quoted as saying that orders were issued to employ "the full reaction force spectrum" and as a result "We are using everything we have." [1]

A German news source revealed that "It is believed to be the first time that the Bundeswehr...has deployed heavy artillery." [2]

Berlin's Defense Ministry additionally acknowledged that the "German air force had also provided close air support for the ground troops for the first time in Afghanistan." [3] And it also divulged that "on July 15 and July 19, for the first time, bombs were dropped in the North by combat aircraft after they had been requested by ground forces." [4]

On July 22 Wolfgang Schneiderhan, Chief of Staff of the Bundeswehr, placed emphasis on the precedents established by the current offensive, describing it as "probably the biggest" operation by German forces in Afghanistan, one which includes "house-by-house searches and looking for the enemy." [5]

As the German news weekly Der Spiegel characterized the development, "For Germans, having their military on the offensive for the first time since World War II involves passing over a major psychological threshold." [6]

Indeed several precedents have been created and several thresholds have been crossed. Not only has Germany now used heavy artillery and warplanes for close air support in combat operations, it has launched a military offensive almost 5,000 kilometers from its borders, the furthest afield that any German army has ever fought.

Moreover, although reunified Germany provided warplanes for NATO's air offensive against Yugoslavia in 1999, Afghanistan is the first time that the armed forces of that nation have conducted - and now commanded - infantry and artillery combat assaults since the defeat of Hitler's Nazi regime in 1945.

The significance of these developments, both in their own right and symbolically, has been completely ignored by the world news media; the quotes used above are with one exception exclusively from German sources.

Never slow to and never scrupulous in using strained comparisons to World War II Germany when it suits their respective governments' purpose at the time, the Western media can be depended upon to pass over the genuine article in favor of false analogies: Any number of "new Hitlers" with black, brown, white and yellow faces have been conjured up during the past fifteen years, but the revival of German militarism and the rehabilitation of Waffen SS soldiers and other Nazi collaborators in several Eastern European nations are either not deemed worthy of attention or excused as a justified response to past or current Russian actions.

The German army is back in action in Afghanistan, the Balkans, the Middle East and Africa and its role in past wars is being viewed with an increasingly indulgent eye among the Western nations that along with it compose NATO.

Yet other prohibitions are being rudely violated, again to an oblivious press corps.

This week the mayor of the Romanian city of Constanta was obliging enough to provide an illustrative lesson. Constanta is home to an air base that is one of four new Romanian military sites acquired by the Pentagon and NATO four years ago with three more in neighboring Bulgaria. The US troops stationed at the seven bases are the first foreign military forces in Romania since 1958 and the first in Bulgaria since World War II.

Constanta's mayor, Radu Mazare, wore a Nazi military uniform at a fashion show in the city he governs and when questioned about it responded, "I wanted to dress like a general from the Wehrmacht because I have always liked this uniform, and have admired the strict organization of the German army." [7]

After coming under pressure for his action he claimed "that the uniform had no swastikas, and that it was just the uniform of a German infantry general, which had nothing to do with SS troops." [8]

To extrapolate from his comments, there would have been no fault to find with Hitler's legions in overrunning Poland, Norway, Belgium, the Netherlands, France, Yugoslavia, Greece and the Soviet Union - leaving tens of millions dead in their wake - if they had first divested themselves of swastika armbands and other party insignia.

It is a lesson that has been learned by the contemporary proponents and practitioners of a Europe united under a common military structure deploying expeditionary forces for wars, occupations and blockades around the world. Collectively, NATO.

Bombers sent to wreak death and destruction the length and breadth of Yugoslavia were named angels of mercy. Multinational military occupation forces firing artillery barrages and dropping 1,000-pound bombs in Afghanistan are an international security assistance force engaged in peacekeeping and provincial reconstruction.

What could be more simple? No swastikas, no war crimes.

In 2006 the German Defense Ministry released a White Paper calling for a transformation of its nation's army into one prepared for international intervention; not ad hoc, as needed or

occasionally, but on a permanent basis.

The nation's defense chief, Franz-Josef Jung, in commenting on the White Paper, "which highlighted the transformation of the Bundeswehr into an international intervention force," [9] demanded that "the government needs the ability to use the Bundeswehr inside of Germany...." [10]

More thresholds were crossed and more decades-long proscriptions transgressed.

Two years ago this December German Chancellor Angela Merkel "said that Germany's growth and prosperity depended on its readiness to be engaged internationally, in cooperation with the EU and NATO, and in the face of challenges such as Kosovo and Iran" and wrote in the Handelsblatt daily that "The classical division between inner and foreign policy is outdated," [11] thereby echoing her defense minister's comments of a year before in both vital regards.

The following May a spokesman for Merkel said that the chancellor endorsed a security paper written by her party, the Christian Democratic Union, which in the words of its author, Bundestag deputy Andreas Schockenhoff, "says it is time that Germany moved on from its postwar inhibitions about force." [12]

A news account at the time wrote that the objective of Merkel and her party was "to drop some of [Germany's] post-World War II inhibitions about robust security measures, including the use of military force abroad and at home."

Among measures advocated in the above-mentioned paper and supported by the chancellor are that "Germany's parliament should cede greater discretion over troop deployments to the executive branch" and that "a new 'national security council,' based in the chancellor's office, should coordinate security ministries." [13]

An important component of endowing Germany with a new international military role made possible by reunification and promoted by NATO is its expansion into the global arms market. Arms manufacturers have no less influence in Berlin than they do in other "free market economies," but the profit motive alone doesn't account for the unparalleled growth of German weapons exports around the world.

Providing arms and capturing the arms market in other countries ensures weapons interoperability and entails training and exercises for future joint actions against third parties. Instruction and drills include mock combat against the planes, ships, submarines, air defenses, ground forces and surveillance systems of potential and prospective adversaries.

The sort of arms Germany is selling in most every part of the world - tanks, submarines, warplanes - aren't used for escort or peacekeeping missions.

Anyone not watching the developments of the past fifteen years may have been shocked to learn this past month in the annual report issued by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) that while global military spending reached \$1.5 trillion in 2008, with the US accounting for almost half of the total, Germany had superseded Britain and France and become the world's third largest weapons exporter.

German arms shipments abroad rose by 20% between 2005 and 2006 and increased by

70% in a five year period. In 2007 Berlin delivered weapons to 126 nations, almost two-thirds of those in the world. The main purchasers were Greece, Turkey and South Africa and the main export items were Leopard II tanks and 124 submarines. Small arms are not Germany's main commodity for export.

In the words of a German think tank expert, "That makes Germany the European Union's biggest military goods exporter, and worldwide it's behind only the US and Russia." [14]

Just as the bulk of Germany's military exports are advanced weapons designed for war, so its clients include several nations currently and recently involved in armed conflicts and that may soon be engaged in others, some of a catastrophic nature.

In 2005 Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, "as something as a good-bye gift," sold Israel two more Dolphin-class submarines, reported to be capable of accommodating missiles with nuclear warheads, at a nominal price. "Outgoing Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer, a member of the once-pacifist Green Party, agreed to the sale." [15]

This followed the delivery of three Dolphins to Tel Aviv in the 1990s - "the most expensive weapon platforms in Israel's arsenal" [16] - by the Helmut Kohl government when "Germany had built two of these in accordance with Israel's demands and donated them free of charge."

Regarding the first installment, "Israel might have given the other three Dolphins it already has nuclear capability, or has increased the range of the nuclear warheads or is planning to increase the range in the new ones." [17]

In reference to the newer acquisitions, "The latest submarines...would be able to carry out a first strike" and "military experts say Israel is sending a clear message to Iran...." [18]

Earlier this month Israel sent one of its Dolphin submarines through the Suez Canal to the Mediterranean Sea for the first time in what the Reuters news agency referred to as "signal to Iran."

In late 2005 it was reported that Germany would add to its Luftwaffe-Israel Air Force and naval, including submarine, collaboration with Israel by forging ties between the two nations' armies.

The head of the European Branch of the Israeli military's Foreign Relations Branch Yigal Hakon was quoted as saying, "After 40 years of unique and very special relations between our two countries, we've been able to develop military-to-military cooperation in almost every area.

"Now it's time to encourage development of operational cooperation among the ground forces." [19]

Last December Germany, in supplementing almost half a billion dollars in US military aid aimed at gaining control over the Lebanese armed forces after the war with Israel in 2006, announced that it "had decided to provide Lebanon with 50 Leopard tanks in addition to other equipment to enhance the army's monitoring capabilities of Lebanon's borders with Syria." [20] German tanks on the Syrian border complement German warships and troops off Lebanon's coast, also avowedly targeting Syria.

In 2005 Germany signed an agreement with Greece for the purchase of 333 Leopard tanks. Greece has intermittent tense relations with Turkey which in recent years have entailed confrontations between the two countries' air forces over the Aegean Sea.

Three months later Berlin reached an arrangement with Greece's rival Turkey to sell it 298 Leopard 2A4 tanks. The Schroeder-Fischer government had made a display of not selling offensive arms to nations engaged in internal conflicts, but had no scruples in selling tanks for use against the Kurdish Workers Party inside Turkey and later in Iraq.

In 2007 Germany offered to lease Marder tanks - currently used by Germany itself in Afghanistan - to Greece, permitting the country's army to "acquire immediately a considerable number of fully operational and combat-condition [armored infantry fighting vehicles], which can be used without any political, operational, functional and legal restrictions, either within, or outside the Greek territory...." [21]

In the same year Poland revealed plans to ship 10 Leopard tanks to Afghanistan. Canada simultaneously announced plans to lease 20 Leopard tanks - "probably the most modern battle tank today in the world" [22] - from Germany and purchase 100 from the Netherlands for use in Afghanistan. "[D]efence chiefs in other countries will have noted the latest demonstration of the weapon's potency." [23]

In 2005 Germany offered to sell submarines to Indonesia, with a Jakarta official stating "Germany offers us a program to acquire submarines to strengthen our military equipment." [24]

Two years ago German Defense Minister Jung visited Japan and met with his opposite number, Japanese Defense Minister Fumio Kyuma. At the time it was reported that "Germany has reason to believe it is about to finalize a billion-dollar deal with Japan on military equipment" and that "Japanese military officials will visit Germany and examine Bundeswehr military equipment, such as the Eurofighter jet, choppers and submarines." [25]

As an aside, Japan announced this week that it may send ground troops to Afghanistan for the first time. If so, troops from the former Berlin-Rome-Tokyo Axis will be serving in the same theater of war for the first time also.

On his way to Japan Jung stopped in South Korea where he discussed "the proposed sale of second-hand Patriot missiles and other military issues, officials said.

"Germany is a main source of South Korea's submarine imports. Eurocopter, a Franco-German firm, is South Korea's partner for the development of advanced military transport helicopters." [26]

In 2006-2007 Germany also solidified military ties with Singapore, which now has a small contingent of troops serving under NATO command in Afghanistan. Three years ago Germany signed an agreement with the nation to provide 66 refurbished Leopard 2A4 tanks, which "represents a significant enhancement in the army's capability" and offered 30 tanks into the bargain. "Training on the Leopard tanks will be provided by the German Army," it was announced. [27]

By the following year Singapore had bought 110 Leopard 2A4 combat tanks and its Defense

Minister Teo Chee Hean met with Germany's Jung at an "army tank unit training complex" near Munster where "Troops from the Singapore defence forces began training...." [28]

In 2007 Germany began talks with Pakistan to sell it three submarines, augmenting what had already been deepening military cooperation. A Pakistani news report provided this background information:

"Pakistan and Germany have deepened military and security ties over the past years.

"There are regular political-military talks with Pakistan army officials on security and military issues which include counter-terrorism and the training of Pakistani officers in Germany.

"Pakistani officers have received military training and education in Germany in recent years as part of military education and training programs."

Germany also trains military personnel from Pakistan's neighbor Afghanistan, Iraq, Georgia, Azerbaijan and other nations either currently in a state of war, having recently concluded one or threatening the same. It provides arms to Azerbaijan and Georgia through NATO arrangements and bilaterally.

The following year Berlin completed the billion dollar sale of three 214 submarines, ones possessing "extraordinarily developed stealth characteristics and an impressive weapon and sensor payload" [29], to Islamabad.

With political and security dynamics in South America not being to the US's - and the West's - liking in recent years, efforts are underway to secure new military allies and client states to add to mainstay Colombia in offsetting the influence of Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador and Argentina.

A 2005 news story called "Chilean Armaments Policy Worries Neighboring Countries" reported that Germany was planning to deliver the first of 100 Leopard 2 tanks to Chile to add to its arsenal of "over 200 Leopard 1 state-of-the-art tanks from Germany, as well as 60 AMX-30 Tanks from France, and 150 M-41 from the United States." [30] A joint agreement planned to further increase the number of Leopard 2 tanks to 200.

The feature added, "Leopard 2 is one of the most up-to-date battle tanks in the world. These tanks are similar to the M-1 Abrams Main Battle Tank, which has figured in the Iraq War. Foreign analysts have said that Chile is seeking hegemonic military power in Latin America vis-a-vis Peru, Argentina and Bolivia....and, in case of armed conflict, to expand its territory in the way it has done in the past." [31]

By last year German Bundeswehr tank trainers were in the country.

This February, almost a year after Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence, Germany was the first nation to offer military equipment - 204 military vehicles - to the illegal entity.

Germany is among the largest weapons providers to South Africa, another nation that could play the role of a regional and continental policeman, and in 2006 staged joint naval war games there according to a scenario designed to "defend Berlin."

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In the months proceeding the US and British invasion of Iraq in March of 2003 the German Social Democratic-Green coalition government was portrayed in the Western media as opposing the war, Operation Iraqi Freedom, and at the time and since Germany is routinely referred to as anti-war and even pacifist.

It's true that Germany didn't provide troops for the invasion and occupation, but hardly because of its opposition to war in principle. The government at the time, that of Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder and Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer, in the preceding four years authorized their nation's participation in the first two wars waged by NATO - against Yugoslavia in 1999 and Afghanistan from 2001 onward - thereby involving Germany in its first wars since the end of World War II.

Berlin also voted with its allies in NATO's Military Command in February of 2003 to send AWACS and Patriot missiles to Turkey under NATO's Article 5 mutual military assistance clause. The action reprised that of Washington in sending Patriots to Israel on the eve of the first war against Iraq, Operation Desert Storm, in 1991.

German troops weren't dispatched to Iraq in large part because of popular opposition to the move, but primarily because with some 10,000 soldiers already stationed in war and post-war zones in the Balkans, Afghanistan and Africa the Bundeswehr's pool of available forces for foreign deployment had been depleted.

With the current government's announcement three years ago that the entire army is to be transformed into "an international intervention force," Berlin may never encounter the need to limit its overseas deployment again.

Part 1

New NATO: Germany Returns To World Military Stage

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/stopnato/message/40658>

<http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=14332>

Part 2

From WW II To WW III: Global NATO And Remilitarized Germany

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/stopnato/message/40691>

<http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=14377>

Part 3

Germany: First New Post-Cold War World Military Power

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/stopnato/message/40717>

<http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=14415>

Part 4

Germany And NATO's Nuclear Nexus

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/stopnato/message/40763>

<http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=14437>

1) Deutsche Welle, July 22, 2009

2) Ibid

3) Xinhua News Agency, July 23, 2009

4) Defense Professionals, July 23, 2009

5) Der Spiegel, July 23, 2009

- 6) Ibid
- 7) Sofia News Agency, July 20, 2009
- 8) Ibid
- 9) Deutsche Welle, October 25, 2006
- 10) Ibid
- 11) Deutsche Welle. December 28, 2007
- 12) Wall Street Journal, June 11, 2008
- 13) Ibid
- 14) Der Spiegel, May 19, 2009
- 15) Deutsche Welle, November 21, 2005
- 16) Agence France-Presse, August 23, 2006
- 17) Zaman, November 25, 2005
- 18) Associated Press, August 24, 2006
- 19) Defense News (US), November 15, 2005
- 20) Ya Libnan, December 23, 2008
- 21) Defense News, November 19, 2007
- 22) CanWest News Service, December 2, 2007
- 23) Deutsche Presse-Agentur, August 1, 2008
- 24) Xinhua News Agency, April 5, 2005
- 25) United Press International, April 23, 2007
- 26) Agence France-Presse, April 20, 2007
- 27) Agence France-Presse, December 11, 2006
- 28) Deutsche Presse-Agentur, August 27, 2007
- 29) Bloomberg News, June 18, 2009
- 30) OhmyNews International, January 1, 2005
- 31) Ibid

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