

German government plans new “anti-terrorism unit”

Johannes Stern
23 March 2015

According to media reports, the German federal police are to receive another heavily armed task force in addition to its current anti-terrorist GSG 9 unit. A spokesperson for the interior ministry confirmed that particular “consideration” had been given to the move.

Information sourced by *Spiegel* news magazine reveals that the new unit—flippantly dubbed “GSG 4½” by insiders—will gradually be expanded to include several hundred recruits whose equipment will resemble that of an army rather than a police force. In addition to shoulder arms and hand guns (pistols, machine pistols and heavy machine guns), the force is also to be equipped with armoured vehicles, bulletproof helmets and vests, capable of withstanding fire from assault rifles like the Kalashnikov. Unlike GSG 9, founded in 1972, the new force is also said to be capable of use in “normal police operations”.

The creation of a de facto paramilitary police force in Germany is part of an extensive domestic and foreign militarisation campaign. Apart from increasing the defence budget by €8 billion, the federal cabinet also resolved last Wednesday to upgrade the security apparatus. Next year, the interior ministry’s budget will grow by 6.7 percent to €6.6 billion, and the police, federal investigative police agency and federal intelligence service will expand to cover a total of 750 posts and receive an additional €328 million by 2019. More than €200 million of this will be directly invested in equipping the secret service and the police.

The official pretext for the formation of the special unit is the “fight against terrorism”. Allegedly the aim is “to enable (forces) to respond quickly and flexibly to attacks within Germany” and “prepare themselves specifically for terror-related emergency situations such as those in Paris and Copenhagen earlier this year” (*Spiegel Online*).

Bavarian Interior Minister Joachim Herrmann (CSU) said on Bavarian Radio: “Based on findings relating to the horrific terrorist attacks in Paris, we are called upon to increase the effectiveness of police forces in Germany”. The police cannot be said to be “perfectly equipped” when someone is armed with heavy weapons, he added.

Armin Schuster, interior ministry expert for the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), said it was necessary to fill the gap between the highly specialised GSG 9 elite unit and the uniformed police force with “a robust entity ... that can do that job”. He considered it “the duty of the government to provide the states with such forces when needed”. Schuster proposed that “by the end of the year, the first fully deployable section of the new anti-terrorism unit (should) be available for the federal police”. This would mean that “the first hundred-strong unit of highly trained and well equipped police agents would then be available for handling terrorist incidents throughout the country”.

In reality, Islamic terrorism serves only as a pretext for the build-up of operational forces nationwide. The perpetrators of the attacks in Paris and Copenhagen, which are now being used to justify the upgrading of the state security apparatus, were previously known to the intelligence services in both cases. Against the background of increasing social inequality within the country and the militarisation of German foreign policy, the main priority of the ruling elite is to undertake preparations to suppress mounting popular opposition.

The proposed anti-terrorism unit is part of the transformation of the federal police into a paramilitary police force, comparable with those in other European countries such as the Republican Security Companies (CRS) and the Mobile Gendarmerie in France, the

Carabinieri in Italy and the Civil Guard in Spain. These garrisoned forces are under the command of the defence and interior ministries of the respective countries, and are de facto military units that take over police tasks on the domestic front when called upon. The separation of the police and military in Germany is enshrined in the country's Basic Law, but observance of the legislation has been continually weakened.

The federal police, which emerged from the federal border police force in 2005, has trained for several years with the paramilitary units of other European countries in preparation for urban warfare and other civil war scenarios. In 2010, manoeuvres involving 26 European police forces were staged on the military training grounds of the Lehnin region in Brandenburg, where contingents of the European Gendarmerie Force (EGF), founded in 2006, also participated.

Forces drawn from eight European constabularies and headquartered in Vicenza, Italy, are multilaterally deployable and can be placed under EU, UN, OSCE and NATO command. So far, the EGF has been deployed in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Afghanistan and Haiti.

Activities of the German police force have also not remained confined to their usual patrol duties. Over the past 25 years, police have been an integral part of German imperialist intervention in other countries. Since the first foreign deployment of police in Namibia from 1989 to 1994, some 9,000 German police officers have participated in a total of 28 missions. Currently, 338 German police officers are serving under the mandate of the United Nations or the European Union in Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Kosovo, Georgia, Liberia and Sudan.

The German police are teaching their "colleagues" abroad what they are also preparing "at home". In recent years, German police have frequently trained and equipped the task forces of repressive regimes, including members of the notorious but now disbanded Ukrainian Berkut special units and security forces in Belarus.

Militarisation of the police is perhaps most obvious in Saudi Arabia, where since 2009 agents of the federal police have been training Saudi border guards in the operation of heavy military equipment supplied by the EADS German-French arms company. Ulrich Wegener, who was commissioned by the then Interior

Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher to establish the GSG 9 after the assassination of hostages at the Munich Olympics in 1972, set up special forces for the dictatorial Saudi regime after his retirement.

The creation of an armed-to-the-teeth, anti-terrorism unit of the federal police is a warning to the working people of Germany. It constitutes a similar development to the one in the US, where special police units (SWAT teams) terrorise the local population with heavy military hardware previously used in US-led wars, and occupy whole cities in the way that was done to quell the unrest in Ferguson last summer.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact