Defender 2020 – NATO’s war maneuver against Russia

“Defender 2020” is one of the biggest war maneuvers since the end of the Cold War.

Transfers by air to airports in Berlin, possibly Bremen, Hamburg, Cologne/Bonn, Frankfurt a.M., Munich, Nuremberg and Ramstein are also planned. Internationally, seaports in the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany and the inland ports of Bremen, Duisburg and Kiel will play a major role in the transfer of materials.

Transport by road is planned along a west-east axis via Düsseldorf, Hanover-Magdeburg - Frankfurt in the north and via Düsseldorf - Mannheim - Nuremberg - Dresden - Gliwice in the south. A north-south transport route is intended to go through Bremerhaven - Hanover - Frankfurt - Mannheim.

Rest areas along the journey are planned in military centres in Rheindahlen, Augustdorf, Burg, Lehnin, Oberlausitz, Garlstedt, Stuttgart-Findel and Frankenberg (Saxony) and also other US installations in Germany.

Within Germany, the Bundeswehr is providing support within the framework of the Hunt Nation Support agreement and this will therefore be based on the requirements of the US. The German Armed Forces Base provides up to 1,500 soldiers for Defender 20 support services alone and which, according to current planning, will be provided at 15 locations. These include the establishment and operation of three Convoy Support Centers in Garlstedt, Burg and Upperton, as well as the construction of a tank facility at the Bergen Military Training Centre.

Central relocations are being carried out with Deutsche Bahn, which gives military transport priority over civil traffic. Chaos and confusion, traffic jams on motorways and disruption on railway lines are inevitable.

In addition, there are also manoeuvres in Lithuania and Latvia and a transfer of troops from there to Germany and Poland. Altogether there are supposed to be seven different, networked and interlocking war manoeuvres. The military education and training is also international. Soldiers from Denmark and Italy are coming to Bergen in addition to the German and US soldiers. Other soldiers from Poland, Lithuania and Sweden are also being brought across the Atlantic to joint training with the Russian western border.

The biggest military exercise takes place in the immediate vicinity of the Russian and Belarusian borders. “Saber Strike” in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland with 18,000 soldiers from 19 countries. In addition, there is “Astral Strike”, an exercise of the US Air Force, which includes air and missile defences at various locations. F-35 stealth bombers and B-52 long-range bombers are also taking part in this exercise.

The size and location of the manoeuvres is a provocation to Russia and carries the risk of a possible direct confrontation between NATO and Russian military formations.

Also, the timing was not chosen at random. The manoeuvres will include the 75th anniversary of the final liberation of Europe and especially Germany from fascism, mainly by the soldiers of the Red Army. Marking a historically significant date with a nod to a former ally who carried the main burden of the liberation of Europe from fascist tyranny, with more than 37 million dead.

This large-scale maneuver, this provocation, against Russia is to be repeated every two years. In the years between, large-scale manoeuvres in the Pacific will take place and light ones in Europe.

How, then, the threat is clear. While across the continent there is concern and discussion about containing life-threatening environmental destruction, the largest destroyer of the environment, the military, is practicing its rituals unimpeded.

These manoeuvres are also part of the comprehensive militarization of societies in Europe. The population becoming more accustomed to war and war preparations.

Defender 2020: An Exercise in (European) Military Mobility

On January 21, 2020 NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg appeared before the Foreign Affairs Committee of the European Parliament. There he was one of many to be questioned about Defender 2020, a military exercise that aims to deploy 25,000 troops directly from the United States throughout the European continent to Russia’s borders (with an overall number of 57,000 soldiers participating). Stoltenberg claimed that “the exercise is important, because it will show the ability of the United States to support and to protect Europe if needed [...] by sending a clear message to any potential adversary.”

This peace through strength rhetoric is as old as it is dangerous, because it further increases the tensions between Russia and the West. The exercise also contributes to the further militarization of the European Union - it is meant to be the first huge stress test for the “Military Mobility” which seeks to guarantee the rapid movement of troops on the European continent.

NATO’s strategy vis-à-vis Russia rests on the ability to deploy a large number of troops to its eastern frontier. Yet the United States has repeatedly argued that the European infrastructure and logistics are unable to ensure the rapid deployment of troops. Therefore, this theme has become one of the focal points of the recently intensified cooperation between NATO and the European Union.

In a Factsheet on “Military Mobility”, the “European Parliamentary Research Service” writes: “Currently, training and the movement of military assets across the continent is severely hampered by the lack of appropriate infrastructure and cumbersome customs procedures. This strategic weakness in European defence cooperation is being addressed by means of action on military mobility: an action plan by the European Commission, a project and commitment under permanent structured cooperation, and a key action for EU-NATO cooperation. Military mobility is meant to ensure the seamless movement of military equipment.
Across the EU by reducing physical, legal and regulatory obstacles. In its ‘Action Plan on Military Mobility’, published in March 2018, the Commission pledged to ‘identify the parts of the trans-European transport network suitable for military transport, including necessary upgrades of existing infrastructure (e.g. the height or the weight capacity of bridges)’. It further envisioned ‘additional financial support for these projects in the next multiannual financial framework’.

In the same month, the first projects of the ‘Permanent Structured Cooperation’ (PESCO) were launched – among them is the ‘Military Mobility’ project, led by Germany and the Netherlands. According to the EU’s program description, it aims ‘to enhance the speed of movement of military forces across Europe’. Another PESCO project that is also under German leadership is the ‘Network of Logistic Hubs in Europe and Support to Operations’, which is, according to the same source, ‘expected to enhance logistic planning and movement as well as to define common standards and procedures, that will greatly improve the EU’s and NATO’s capability to conduct even the most demanding missions.’

In line with the ‘Action Plan on Military Mobility’, the Commission proposed that, by 2025, Europe be specifically dedicated to ‘Military Mobility’ in the next EU Financial Framework (2021-2027), while simultaneously proposing a slight decrease to civilian infrastructure budgets.

It is this context, in which Defender 2020 shall play a vital role, as Heather Conley, director of the Europe Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, pointed out, when she said the exercise will ‘help identify the “hubs” in the European commercial logistics networks, which range from space to commercial rail systems to Chinese port control of select European ports.’ Therefore, a major goal of Defender 2020 is to ‘improve’ – read: militarize – Europe’s civilian transport infrastructure as a key element in the NATO Cold War that nobody will win, if it ever turns hot.

Governments make war exercises, workers strike to stop war business

A mobilization started at the port of Genoa by the harbour workers has stopped the loading of war materials heading to Saudi Arabia and destined for the war in Yemen. Similar struggles have been held in other European ports. These international strikes are one of the most concrete and effective actions against the European war industry and mobilization for war – on an global scale.

It is obvious that Russian generals are thinking over options for defense in such an environment and adjusting their future actions in case of military aggression against them. Unfortunately, the situation in the sphere of international security is getting worse. The risk of a large-scale war is increasing. However, not everyone understands the consequences. The patience of nuclear Russia was enough for German politicians. Let’s hope that this patience will be enough for all countries.

Lukas Rutenber, author of the Baltic Word, Latvia

Defender 2020: An Exercise in (European) Military Mobility

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I am an active supporter of your anti-NATO position. I am strongly against military exercise Defender Europe 20 in Latvia and in any country. To make my position loud I sent an open letter to Latvian Media, which was published on www.change.org/latvian-ministry-of-defence-we-are-against-cheap-expansion-of-the-media-mass-media-military-training-ground-in-latvia

Alvis Pēruš, Latvia

Participation in Defender 2020 means NATO’s states defend the right of US-American forces to contaminate drinking water, groundwater, rivers, soil, and air throughout the continent. The Status of Forces Agreements between the US and European states give the USA this right. It is the duty of people who love the planet to resist such authoritarian foolishness.

Pat Elden, World BEYOND War, USA

The manoeuvre represents a pro-

Gesetzgebung, Bernstein, Pechlan (EUCOM) in Stuttgart-Vaihingen is expected to take on important tasks. Unfortunately, Defender 2020 is not a one-time event that would be dangerous but thankfully over and forgotten in a year’s time. No, in future the Defender exercise will be extended every year – not only as a transatlantic manoeuvre, but also in parallel in the Pacific region. The manoeuvres are scheduled to take place every year as heavy and light manoeuvres. While the 2020 manoeuvres in the Pacific will only be a so-called light manoeuvre, the transatlantic manoeuvre will be extensive. In 2021 the Pacific manoeuvres will be the heavyweight one and Europe will be host to the Light version of the exercise. The manoeuvre to break new ground on many levels, and a space component is also to be integrated into the joint exercise by the US and NATO forces.

According to the U.S. military they are planning to deploy a first prototype of the TITAN (Tactical Intelligence Targeting Access Node) during the multinational Defender Europe 20 manoeuvres. This technology relies on numerous sensors and uses artificial intelligence to manage the multitude of data collected. Among other things, it should be possible to discover hidden enemy targets. Titan is said to enable soldiers to exercise command of missions in a complex, multi-domain battlefield. In addition, other technological approaches such as machine learning, robotic system or sound weapons will be tested.

The political and ecological impact of the series of Defender exercises will be tremendous. Nevertheless, Euro-

Claudia Haydl, Information Center Militarization, Germany

T he stated goal of Defender is to simulate a confrontation with an almost equally strong opponent (near-peer adversary) and to demonstrate the ability of the USA to ‘project power’ across the Atlantic and against the Pacific as we will see later on. In other words, Defender is about Russia and China.

With regard to the concrete steps taken within the framework of DEF20, in addition to the transport logistics, it is also explicitly about cross-border combat and combat preparation, as can be seen from the task description for the Bundeswehr which was sent to the leaders in the Defense Committee in the German parliament: ‘Combat, combat support and leadership – in Germany, Poland and Lithuania’, are explicitly mentioned there as priority areas for the participation of the armed forces. It is therefore not surprising that the enhanced forward presence (eFP) battlegroup, currently led by German soldiers, in Lithuania is an integral part of this mobilization.

The new NATO command center in JIEC (Joint Support and Enabling Command), situated in Southern Germany (Ulm), is included in the large maneuver of the Combined Defender exercise.

It can be assumed that the JIEC will practice what will be its central role in NATO in the future: the coordination of transatlantic mobilization against Russia. In addition, the European Command of the US Armed Forces (EUCOM) in Stuttgart-Vaihingen is expected to take on important tasks.

Unfortunately, Defender 2020 is only underlines ‘the United States’ appreciation for multi-national cooperation’ and the ‘clear commitment’ of the United States to Europe’s security’. It can be doubted whether such saber rattling really brings more security – on the contrary, there are fears that such maneuvers will increase the risk of war in Europe and in the Pacific region. That is why it is necessary to prepare decentralized, nationwide and European campaigns by the peace movement and hopefully numerous allies.

Geo-strategic impact of Defender 2020

Let’s be clear: Defender 2020 (DEF20) is not about defense it all about war - on an global scale.

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No to Defender

“Europe Defender 2020” is a huge maneuver with 37,000 soldiers including 20,000 soldiers from the US, the biggest deployment of US forces since the end of the Cold War.

Although Defender began at the end of January, the main events happen in April and May. NATO troops from 14 countries will be involved. The maneuver is a huge military exercise in order to strengthen the readiness of NATO troops and it is justified by the alleged aggressive policy of Russia. With this maneuver, NATO wants to demonstrate its military force. It’s obviously directed against Russia, even if the NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg denies it. “Defender” is a part of NATO’s dangerous expansion strategy towards the East. It’s quite the opposite of what is needed. Instead of reducing the political tensions, this exercise is aggravating the conflicts we are already facing. Furthermore, from an ecological point of view, this maneuver has to be condemned. It heavily damages the environment and undermines all the efforts to reduce the CO2 emissions which are necessary for combating climate change.

The timing of “Defender” in April and May is not a coincidence. The 8th of May will be the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Germany and Europe from fascism. This was decisively achieved by the Red Army and the sacrifice of millions of Russian soldiers and civilians. Ideologically “Defender” is a part of the current attempt to distort history and deny the important and decisive contribution of Russia, i.e. the former Soviet Union. “Europe Defender 2020” is not defending Europe. On the contrary, it seems to be more a preparation for war and not a contribution for peace as it is presented. Defender, which will be the biggest maneuver in 25 years, and is a political disaster; we don’t need more military exercises but rather a new initiative for disarmament and peace to overcome the current situation, which is characterized by growing military conflicts worldwide.

The unconditional commitment to peace and disarmament is one of the quintessential elements of the politics of the Left. We strongly support all the activities against this war-maneuver, and we call for a broad manifestation to reject it. It’s time for a strong peace movement. We need an alliance as broad as possible. The European Left demands a stop to the arms race immediately, opposes the increase in military spending and supports all cultural and civic cooperation leading to peace in Europe. The European Left reaffirms its opposition to permanent structurally funded cooperation (PESCO). We request a initiative for a new policy of détente. NATO is not an organization defending the interests of the Europeans. We don’t share Macron’s politics, but he is right when he calls NATO “brain dead”. The NATO strategy doesn’t correspond to the actual requirements for peace and sustainable development, but instead is dangerous. We are convinced that we need a new collective security system, which also includes Russia.

Heinz Bierbaum, President European Left

It is totally unacceptable that the world’s resources, natural, financial and intellectual, are being misused for military purposes. The military actually makes us less safe, by the enormous greenhouse gas emissions, the radiation and pollution. We cannot allow the military to be an exception to international climate agreements. We must move the money to tackle the real security issues such as the threat to the very survival of humanity and the planet, climate change, environmental degradation, excessive inequality or nuclear weapons.

Mairead Maguire, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, Ireland

There is almost no information about US Defender Europe 20 in the Finnish media. According to the Ministry of Defence, Finland is not directly involved in the exercise. But Finland is participating on a couple of the smaller exercises included in European Defender. The most important are the “Estonian Spring Storm” and “Sabre Strike” exercises. This is a clear strategy to avoid protests and open debate. Democracy is succumbed to military rule!

Eija Klüter, Women for Peace, Finland

Do the US and NATO want to catapult Europe back to the Cold War era? Defender 2020 is a large-scale provocative war game. They claim that this gigantic military build-up will serve our security. In reality it will increase tensions and provoke a dangerous arms race with Russia. We are in urgent need of effective measures and policies to prevent climate change. Army forces are emitting greenhouse gases on a massive scale. A huge waste of money we need to stop!

Ludo De Brabander, vredesvzw, Belgium

France and NATO: Macron’s smokescreen continues

Since the French President declared that NATO is “brain dead”, NATO has not been an issue in France, be it in official speeches or in the press. We only learn from US sources and NATO information that the French army will participate in Defender 2020. As a peace movement, we are the only ones to inform the French public. What is the meaning of French participation? Which troops will take part and what role will they play? Enough lies and information withheld! France has no business with an aggressive NATO! Get out of NATO! Dissolution of NATO!

Alain Rouy, Mouvement de la Paix, France / Collectif français NON A TOTAN

France, 24 March

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Ingjerd Breines, Norway

Call to Citizens of NATO Countries, EU and Russia

We are part of the SICK planet Earth. The politicians of NATO and Russia are trying to make us enemies 75 years after the Second World War. We are Friends, not Enemies!

Oleg Bodrov, physicist, ecologist, Chairman of the Public Council of the South Coast of the Gulf of Finland, Russia

» Actions of civil disobedience against Defender 2020 are needed & important. I call on international peace movements to act. «

Mairead Maguire

NATO, which should have been disbanded when the Warsaw Pact was dissolved, continues to carry out wars and organize weapons. An accidental mistake by one of the parties in the region may launch Armageddon. The politicians of NATO and Russia are trying to make us enemies 75 years after the Second World War. We are Friends, not Enemies!

Heinz Bierbaum, President European Left

3
Appeal from Leipzig: “No to NATO war maneuvers – yes to peace, détente and disarmament” (Extract)

Launched by the alliance against Defender 2020

... During transport, there will be severe restrictions on road and rail traffic along the transport routes. The Bundeswehr has agreed a priority rule with Deutsche Bahn AG for all military transports. ... The size of the maneuver and the location along Russia’s western border represent a provocation to Russia. The maneuver involves the danger of a possible direct confrontation between NATO and Russian military units. The timing was not chosen at random either: 75 years after Europe’s liberation from fascism, mainly by the Red Army, German soldiers are marching again on the Russian border. With Defender 2020, the USA, Great Britain and France send a historically forgotten signal to the former ally from the anti-Hitler coalition.

In the “2 plus 4” treaty of 1990, the basis of German unification, it was agreed that only peace should come from German soil. ... We stand up for these goals and say resolutely: NO to NATO war maneuver Defender 2020 ...

We will demonstrate for this everywhere before and during the maneuver - non-violent but powerful. On the streets, squares and bridges, the affected train stations, in front of the military training areas - in Germany and internationally. With a vigil relay along the entire route, legal action and actions of civil disobedience - creative and diverse. ... Go with us on the streets, protest where you work and live! Peace needs movement let us start with this deFENDER!

Support from Trade Unions

Support from ver.di organizations

The regional executive board of ver.di North supports the Leipzig call: “No to NATO war maneuvers – yes to peace, détente and disarmament” and demand:

► Détente policy and political conflict resolution instead of military Confrontation
► Cooperation with Russia in a common European house
► consistent disarmament and redistribution of the funds released

The district executive of ver.di Stuttgart decided to support the Leipzig declaration “No to NATO war maneuvers – yes to peace, détente and disarmament” against Defender 2020.

Extract Appeal DGB Nord

... On the one hand, the maneuver is intended to test the transfer of large combat units from the USA ... to NATO’s eastern flank, and on the other hand to demonstrate NATO’s military superiority. From the point of view of the trade unions, instead of this confrontation, a policy of détente and cooperative relations with Russia will be the order of the day just as in the Charter of Paris 1990 was formulated by all European states – including Russia, the USA and Canada: “The age of confrontation and division of Europe has come to an end. We declare that our relations in the future are based on respect and coopera-

Extract Appeal EVG Berlin

The declared aim is to ... “test strategic readiness and reinforcement” - i.e. the smooth transport of troops and weapons to Russia’s western border.

The EVG in Berlin is against this major maneuver, which other countries might interpret as preparation for war. We fear ... a new spiral of armament. ... we are also against the planned increase in the arms budget. The EVG Berlin therefore demands that German participation in this maneuver be stopped.

Measures against Defender 2020

With 20,000 US troops coming over for these massive war games, this is the US’s largest deployment to Europe in over 25 years. With 19 states involved totaling 77,000 troops, this is an extraordinary provocation. We must mobilise to oppose it – and raise public awareness of the dangers it presents.

Katrin Hudson, CND, UK

Actions and Schedules

March and April regional actions for information, vigils at military installations and possible blockades

21.03.  Duisburg Demonstration against Defender 2020 and the transport through NRW and elsewhere.
22.03.  3rd national action conference in Leipzig.
28.03.  Conference of the left-wing faction in the BT and the LV Saxony and Brandenburg in Weißwasser.
03.04. – 05.04.  Decentralized vigils and blockades in front of military installations to start the Easter marches, Action on the Oder-Neisse peace border.
10.04. – 13.04.  Over 100 Easter marches in Germany.
24.04. – 25.04.  75th anniversary of the Day of Encounter in Torgau (regional focus Saxony-Brandenburg with supra-regional support).
08.05.  Liberation Day (75th anniversary) Participation in local actions, among others at the EUCOM in Stuttgart.
09.05.  Victory Day supra-regional demonstration at the Bergen military training area, the tank farm from Defender 20, DFG-VK Bicycle Tour Upper Palatinate with US training grounds Grafenwoehr and Hohenfels.
13.06.  Actions around the “Day of the German Armed Forces” should be under the slogan “Stop NATO maneuvers DEF 20!”