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U.S.-German Relations and Military Cooperation

Introduction

Let me start with a preliminary remark. I am a new member of the Loisach Group. This meeting today and tomorrow is the first event I have the honor and pleasure to attend. On 31 July this year, I retired from service as NATO Assistant Secretary General for Defense Policy and Planning and as a German Army Lieutenant General. You will understand that my view of the U.S.-German relations is therefore significantly influenced by my experiences in the North Atlantic Alliance. Consequently, I will focus my remarks on the state of U.S.-German political-military—rather solely military—cooperation.

I will first look at U.S.-German military relations and cooperation in general terms. I will then briefly discuss this relationship from a more geostrategic perspective. Subsequently, I will outline the U.S.-German cooperation within NATO and, finally, I intend to touch upon the burden sharing issue and the decisions taken by our political leaders at the Brussels Summit, as they are also important for the U.S.-German relations.



Discussion

The U.S.-German military relationship has for many decades been informed and shaped by the cooperation between our countries within the NATO framework. It was the Alliance that protected the free part of Germany against the threat of Soviet invasion. The historical success of the Alliance contributed to the fall of the Berlin Wall. And it particularly was the United States that supported the unification of Germany without any reservation as

well as the creation of a Europe whole and free. The longstanding presence of hundreds of thousands of allied troops and their families had created a special relationship between our countries, in particular between the German and the American people at that time. It underpinned the transatlantic bond by a strong human dimension.

My colleagues in the German Ministry in Defense in Berlin, who are in charge of tracking the work on German-American bilateral military cooperation, told me that the relations between the two countries in the area of defense have been professional and very good and have, in general, not been affected by the current turbulences at the political level. The personal relationship between Defense Minister von der Leyen and Secretary of Defense Mattis has been trustful and effective. And this is also true in the recent past for the relationship between the two chiefs of defense (CHODs), General Dunford and General Wieker, as well as between the German CHOD and SACEUR, General Scaparrotti, including in his capacity as COM USEUCOM in Stuttgart. The fact that for several years the Chief of Staff for the U.S.

Army in Europe in Wiesbaden has been a German Brigadier General is a testament to the high quality of military-to-military cooperation in Germany and an excellent sign of mutual trust.

German and American Forces have been working closely together in various operations in the Balkans in Bosnia in the past and currently work together in Kosovo, where the U.S. remains the largest troop contributor. In Afghanistan, the enduring German contribution to the Resolute Support Mission, which has increased in size from 980 to 1,300 troops, and the German leadership role as framework nation in North Afghanistan have been repeatedly recognized by the United States. In the past, within ISAF, we Germans enjoyed a lot of military support, in particular in terms of air support, without which our missions would have been much more demanding. That said, I am aware that the U.S. side, as well as other allies, are sometimes not satisfied with the German approach to sharing common risks and responsibilities in operations. Germany is expected to take the same risks as other allies do and “go kinetic” and participate in high-end operations, when necessary, including in the framework of the Coalition against Daesh. And for my part, I share the U.S. view, as do many of my compatriots.

In Europe, and seen from a geostrategic perspective, Germany is the largest and most important military base for U.S. troops. There are some 33,250 troops and some 23,800 civil servants and local collaborators working for the U.S. forces. Germany hosts two out of six Regional Commands, EUCOM and AFRICOM. Clearly, the persistent presence of U.S. troops in Germany has been very beneficial for my country. But Germany is also of high strategic and military value for the United States.

It is the hub for U.S. military deployments to everywhere in Europe and beyond. For deterrence and defense against Russia, Germany is the main access point for deployment of forces from North America. Germany is also the starting point for rotational deployment to Poland of the U.S. Armored Brigade Combat Team as well as for enablers in peacetime and any potential future reinforcement from the U.S. and Canada to Europe in a crisis and in war. For crisis response outside Europe, Germany is the strategic hub for U.S. power projection to the Middle East and North Africa and for the provision of logistic support for ongoing U.S. operations, for example in Afghanistan. Ramstein Air Base is not only the Air Command of the NATO Command Structure and one of its three Component Commands reporting to SACEUR; it is also the home of USAFE-AFAFRICA, i.e., the U.S. national Air Command of USEUCOM/AFRICOM and thus the largest U.S. air base and logistics hub in Europe and its strategic periphery. The mutually beneficial effect of Germany's role as the strategic hub for U.S. forces deploying to Europe and from here to other geostrategic regions and the resulting U.S.-German military cooperation is also reflected in the establishment of two new commands as part of the adapted NATO Command Structure, as decided at the Brussels Summit in July, namely the U.S.-led Joint Force Command Norfolk (JFCN) in Norfolk, Virginia and the German-led Joint Enabling and Support Command (JSEC) in Ulm, Germany. Both new commands complement each other in managing and facilitating the movement of forces across the Atlantic to, across, and from Europe, including, for instance, reinforcement or crisis intervention deployments outside of NATO-Europe's borders.

In particular, the new JSEC will have to play a key role in the future. For rapid reinforcement, NATO's territory needs to be “enabled” to allow for seamless movement of forces to wherever they may be needed. My friend LTG (ret.) Ben Hodges can tell you a thing or two about this. In his former capacity as Commander U.S. Army Europe, he rendered great service by informing and contributing to NATO's work on enablement with his many initiatives, activities, and experiences in moving U.S. forces from Bremerhaven, Germany through the northern and eastern parts of Germany to Poland, through Poland to the Baltic States in the northeast, or to Romania in the southeast of NATO-Europe. With his support, NATO developed a comprehensive Enablement Plan for SACEUR's entire area of responsibility, and

work is now underway to implement this plan.

In parallel, the European Union is working to implement its Action Plan on Military Mobility. Both initiatives complement one another greatly. NATO and the EU as well as NATO allies and EU member states are now working together to improve military mobility in a number of areas, including, for example, on creating the necessary legislative conditions for rapid cross-border movement of military personnel, equipment, and forces both on the ground and in the air, during peacetime as well as in crises. We are also working on improving civilian infrastructure, such as main supply routes, bridges, tunnels, harbors, and airfields, to allow for military movements, including heavy forces for large-scale operations. In this context, it is worth noting that the European Commission has established its Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) program comprising some 2,500 projects within nine core network corridors across Europe and is prepared to co-finance projects that are of dual civilian and military use. These dual-use projects will benefit both NATO allies and EU member states. In Brussels, cooperation on military mobility is considered a flagship of NATO-EU cooperation. As this cooperation will contribute to facilitating the deployment of U.S. forces to, across, and from Europe, it plays a significant role in transatlantic burden sharing.

Against this background, the new JSEC will become a sort of focal point for facilitating military mobility in and for Europe, through planning, coordinating, supporting and protecting the movement of forces to where they would be needed. It will not only work with the relevant national authorities, with NATO, the headquarters of the NATO Command Structure, and the EU, but also with USEUCOM and its component commands, in particular USAREUR. I know the Germans are keen to get the JSEC up and running. They have already advanced their work on concepts, structures, procedures and plans considerably. And this not only with a view to the key role it will play within NATO but also its role as a hub within an emerging EU logistics network.

Let's now take a look at German-American relations within NATO. There, the U.S. and Germany are members of the so-called Quad, that is the group of the four most capable and influential NATO allies: the United States, France, the United Kingdom, and Germany. These allies hold regular informal meetings to exchange views and to coordinate policy and common initiatives. It is said in NATO that it requires the support of the Quad to move major issues forward and facilitate consensus in the North Atlantic Council as well as in its committees.

A shining example of the effectiveness of this informal coordination and cooperation in the Quad is the work on NATO's adaptation to the fundamentally changed security environment since 2014 and in particular the preparation for the decisions taken by the 2016 Warsaw Summit on strengthening NATO's deterrence and defense posture. I had the honor and pleasure to lead this work at the level of the International Staff in NATO. The close, trustful, and like-minded coordination and cooperation in particular with Ambassador Alexander Vershbow, the then-Deputy NATO Secretary General, and the then-U.S. Ambassador to NATO, Doug Lute, as well as the British, French, and German delegations at NATO were instrumental in achieving agreement on reinvigorating the principles of deterrence in NATO after some twenty-five years focusing on out-of-area crisis management. It was also decisive in achieving Alliance agreement on the most sensitive issue of deploying multinational combat-ready battlegroups to Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland to enhance NATO's persistent forward presence in these countries that share borders with Russia.

This informal coordination and cooperation with great U.S. support were also essential in paving the way for the decisions by the political leaders of Canada, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States

to take the lead on one Battlegroup (BG) each, with France providing a Task Force to alternate between the UK-led BG in Estonia and the German-led BG in Lithuania. These enhanced Forward Presence Battlegroups provide NATO deterrence towards Russia in a nutshell; they clearly demonstrate to the Russian leadership that even in case of a limited attack with a perceived limited risk aimed at achieving a fait accompli to blackmail NATO, Russia would immediately be engaged in a military conflict with the Alliance as a whole, including in particular the three nuclear powers and Germany, the strongest European nation.

Furthermore, together with the United Kingdom, the U.S. and Germany are lead nations of the Transatlantic Capability Enhancement and Training Initiative (TACET), through which the forces of the three Baltic states and Poland are being trained and receive defense capacity-building support. Moreover, Germany provided the largest European contingent of 8,000 troops (out of some 50,000 troops) for the NATO exercise Trident Juncture 2018 that took place in Norway. Next year, Germany will lead NATO's spearhead force, the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force, and will contribute some 5,000 troops to be on standby for one year. The U.S. also provides some key strategic enablers, which is very much appreciated.

Moreover, the significant increase of U.S. commitment to and spending on Europe's security as part of the European Deterrence Initiative (EDI) under the Trump administration is highly appreciated in Germany and in Europe writ large. The budget for EDI will increase from \$3.4 billion in 2017 to \$6.5 billion in 2019; this will allow for more U.S. troops in Europe, particularly in Poland, as well as enhanced pre-positioning of equipment, more exercises and training, and improved infrastructure. As part of it, the U.S. has deployed inter alia an Armored Brigade Combat Team (up to 5,000 troops) to Poland on a rotational basis. From 2019, additional U.S. troops will be deployed to Europe and additional military equipment will be pre-positioned, all of which send a very important strategic signal to the Russian leadership.

Conclusion

Finally, let me offer a few final thoughts on future U.S.-German cooperation within the framework of transatlantic burden sharing, as this issue currently very much affects the U.S.- German defense relationship.

At the recent NATO Summit in Brussels in July, political and public attention almost exclusively focused on allies' defense expenditures and the issue of spending 2% of national GDPs on defense. President Trump again confronted the European allies and Canada with his demand that they increase their defense expenditures up to 2%. He did not acknowledge that after many years of decline, defense expenditures across Europe and Canada has continuously increased in real terms since 2014. In 2017, NATO allies across Europe and Canada boosted their defense budgets by a combined 5.2 % (i.e., some 15 billion U.S. dollars) over 2016, which represents the biggest increase in a quarter of a century. 2018 will mark the fourth consecutive year of rising defense spending. Over the past two years, European allies and Canada have spent a cumulated 41 billion U.S. dollars. The biggest European economy, Germany, spent 1.27 % of GDP on defense last year and announced it would raise defense spending to 1.5 % in 2024. This implies an increase of the German defense budget by some 80% up to more than 60 billion Euros, thus doubling the German defense budget within a decade. That said, as things now stand, Germany and a number of other allies are not likely to meet the 2% guideline agreed to under the Defense Investment Pledge (DIP) that was established at the 2014 Wales Summit.

Fair burden sharing, however, is not just about "cash." It is also about the "capabilities" NATO needs to

successfully execute all its missions as well as “contributions” to operations and missions. The political agenda of the Brussels Summit was much broader and much more substantial with regard to “capabilities” such as the development of ground, air, and maritime forces, NATO’s posture, command and control, planning, and military mobility. Our political leaders took far-reaching decisions on further strengthening NATO’s deterrence and defense posture to ensure it is capable of responding to all threats, from wherever they arise, and to ensure that the Alliance has the right forces in the right place at the right time to respond in a timely and effective manner. Work on NATO’s adaptation and the relevant Brussels decisions has therefore been centered on creating a culture of readiness. Efforts to implement these decisions are already in full swing. They can be summarized as follows.

- Improving advance planning for reinforcement and defense of threatened allies as well as an effectively responding to Russia’s Anti Access/Area Denial (A2AD) capabilities, in the Arctic, the Baltic Sea (Kaliningrad), and the Black Sea (Crimea) so as to ensure freedom of decision in crisis and conflict.
- Improving the Alliance’s strategic anticipation capability and decision-making procedures, for short or no-notice crisis.
- Adapting the NATO Command Structure (NCS) to enable SACEUR to execute command and control operations across the whole mission spectrum, including large-scale maneuver operations for collective defense under hybrid conditions and cyber threats and in view of simultaneous risks and threats in multiple regions. To this end, the NCS will be reinforced by some 1,200 personnel.
- Implementing the NATO Readiness Initiative, the so-called “Four Thirties,” designed to improve the readiness of up thirty land battalions, thirty air squadrons, and thirty combat vessels, getting them “ready to employ” (i.e. combat-ready already in theater) in thirty days or less by 2020 and to further develop these forces into larger formations at high readiness (land combat brigades, maritime task groups, and enhanced air wings) in the years to come.
- Implementing the Enablement Plan for SACEUR’s area of operations complementary to and in coordination with the EU Action Plan on Military Mobility, as outlined above.
- Developing a reinforcement concept based on a holistic view of SACEUR’s entire area of operations and the various regions at NATO’s periphery where Allies could be threatened, whether in the north, the east, the southeast, or the south. • Reinforcement of the Alliance Maritime Posture to cover the Atlantic, the North Atlantic, the Baltic and Black Seas, and the Mediterranean Sea as a connected whole, reinvigorating maritime warfighting skills and protecting sea lines of communication.