

“Defender 21”: sabre rattling in Europe

by Alexander Neu*



Alexander Neu
(Picture
www.bundestag.de)

A spectre is haunting Europe – once again. And, once again, it is not communism, but the opposite – the iron fist of US capitalism/imperialism: the US-led manoeuvre Defender-Europe 21. To be fair, one has to concede that the US-dominated NATO is the real iron fist of Western imperialism.

For our transatlantic friends in the German government, the Bundestag, for some media as well as in other European capitals, a statement in the press release of the “US Army Europe and Africa” should provide special relief and warmth of heart after the difficult years of the *Trump* presidency: “DEFENDER-Europe 21’ is proof of the iron-clad US commitment to NATO ...”.

This is how the manoeuvre is described on the “US-Army and Africa” homepage: “DEFENDER-Europe is an annual, comprehensive, “US-Army and Africa”-led, multinational, joint exercise, designed to enhance strategic and operational readiness and interoperability between the US, NATO allies and other partners.”

Parliament not informed

In contrast to the first Defender manoeuvre in 2020, the German Defence Committee did not receive any advance information this time, which is why I had the topic put on the committee's agenda for 14 April 2021 on 29 March 2021. Why

the German government is even less proactive in providing information on issues of limited transparency this year compared to last year, will have to be clarified in the committee.

In October 2019, in a letter to the committee, the Ministry of Defence virtually bristled with pride and embarrassing obsequiousness that the USA recognised Germany's important role alongside its transatlantic partner in the form of the Defender 2020 manoeuvre. The fact that the geographical focus of the manoeuvre this year is not Germany and Poland, but the Balkan region, cannot be an explanation for the Ministry of Defence's information fatigue, because the *Bundeswehr* is once again a well-behaved subservient partner of the US Army this year.

Altogether, the manoeuvre is to take place with 28,000 soldiers from 27 countries, the majority of them NATO countries, in more than 30 exercise areas. The aim is to exercise the military capabilities of the USA and its partners in Europe in the strategically important Balkans and the Black Sea region, so that the participants are able to react to any crisis that may arise. It was not clear from the announcement whether Defender Europe 21 would also be able to react to the Corona crisis in the region. However, it would have been interesting to know if, instead of cannons, vaccination syringes would be given to the local population for a change. Regarding Corona, it was only stated that the US troops and their partners were well prepared to successfully implement the peacekeeping manoeuvre.

The manoeuvre began in March with the shipment of personnel and material from the USA to Europe. In April, participating units will open weapons stockpiles provided in Germany, the Netherlands and Italy. The main part of the training programmes will take place in May and the manoeuvre is to end with the redeployment of the US troops in June. It is not explicitly stated against whom the manoeuvre is directed, but, as with Defender 2020, it is not concealed from a clear-thinking person: against Russia – this time

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on the south-eastern front up to the Black Sea. If you look at the map on the homepage “US-Army

Europe and Africa”, two things are particularly striking:¹

DEFENDER-Europe 21 is an annual large-scale U.S. Army Europe and Africa-led, joint, multinational exercise designed to build readiness and interoperability between U.S., NATO and partner militaries.

DEFENDER
Europe

26
PARTICIPATING NATIONS:

- Albania
- Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Canada
- Estonia
- Germany
- Hungary
- Kosovo
- Lithuania
- Montenegro
- North Macedonia
- Romania
- Spain
- Ukraine
- United States
- Bulgaria
- Croatia
- Georgia
- Greece
- Italy
- Latvia
- Moldova
- Netherlands
- Poland
- Slovenia
- Turkey
- United Kingdom

MARCH

Personnel and **1,200** pieces of equipment begin moving from the U.S. to ports in **4** European countries, a **5th** port will be used for redeployment in June

APRIL

12 European country's airports receiving equipment and personnel from the U.S.

3 Army Prepositioned Stock sites being utilized with **1,000** pieces of equipment being drawn

4 Countries hosting **5** logistics centers

MAY

12 Countries hosting multinational live fire exercises across **31** training areas during **Immediate Response**

9 Countries hosting air and missile defense activities during **Immediate Response** and **Saber Guardian**

3 Countries hosting **4** airborne operations during **Swift Response**

1 Joint Logistics Over-the-Shore operation during **Immediate Response**

1 Hospital exercise, including a joint theater medical evacuation **Saber Guardian**

JUNE

6 Countries participating in the **Command Post Exercise**, which includes V Corps from Fort Knox, Kentucky

28,000
multinational participants

16 Nations
hosting exercise related activities

2,100
National Guard Soldiers from **5** U.S. states participating

800
Army Reserve participants

Linked Exercises:
Swift Response
Immediate Response
Saber Guardian
Command Post Exercise

Associated Exercises:
NATO's Steadfast Defender
U.S. Africa Command's African Lion

All numbers are approximate and locations are subject to change

For more information visit www.europeafrica.army.mil/DefenderEurope or follow [#DefenderEurope](https://twitter.com/DefenderEurope)

Serbia in focus

Serbia is not participating in the sabre rattling against Russia – but five of the six successor states of the former Yugoslavia are. With their participation in the US manoeuvre, Serbia is virtually encircled, which could also be interpreted as a hidden threat to Serbia to join NATO as soon as possible in order to be able to live in peace and prosperity in the future. The participation of the NATO/EU colony Kosovo is likely to be particularly painful for Serbia.

If Serbia, despite all its experiences to the contrary since 1998, still believes in an exchange with the West on an equal footing, however halfway cooperative and based on international law, then Kosovo's participation in the manoeuvre should once again prove the opposite. But whether Serbia will finally draw its conclusions from this and orient itself towards a strict policy of neutrality, as Yugoslavia once successfully practised, remains an open question.

Finally, it should be noted that this year's manoeuvre will be the second, but not the last of its kind in Europe. On the contrary, Defender is to take place annually in two world regions of particular interest to US imperialism: in Europe against Russia and in the Western Pacific/Southeast Asia against China. This fits wonderfully into the image of the enemy constructed by the USA and artfully adopted by the European members of NATO. As a reaction to this, China and Russia are currently approaching each other with great strides, despite considerable internal contradictions.

Building peace, stability and security looks different.

Source: <https://diefreiheitsliebe.de/politik/defender-21-saebelrasseln-in-europa/> from 31 March 2021

(Translation «Swiss Standpoint»)

¹ <https://www.europeafrica.army.mil/ArticleViewPressRelease/Article/2537359/press-release-defender-europe-21-activities-begin-this-month-include-two-dozen/>