

Germany Is Squeezed, To Back War on Iraq

by Rainer Apel

Germany is being pressured in a mass bombardment by U.S. and Israeli propagandists, enhanced by the German media, to get more active in the second phase of the “war on terrorism”: first the campaign against Iraq, and later on, against Iran. Not only are the more publicly radical spokesmen for this policy, such as Paul Wolfowitz, Richard Perle, and Benjamin Netanyahu, leading the propaganda barrage; U.S. National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice has also tried to drum up German support for the attack on Iraq, in interviews with the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. Every serious military expert knows that for a full-scale military operation against Iraq, logistics are required that are available only from what America and NATO have jointly assembled in manpower, combat equipment, and ammunition. The buildup for the 1991 Iraq war showed how crucial it was to draw on supplies stored in Germany.

But there is reluctance in Germany to go along with the war on Iraq, as illustrated by the joint statement against a military solution of the Saddam Hussein problem, which the German Chancellor and the Russian President issued at the conclusion of their two-day summit in Weimar on April 10. There are, furthermore, doubts in Germany among leading politicians and anti-terrorism experts, that al-Qaeda is what the Bush Administration has presented it as being.

Something bigger is required, to pull the Germans into active support for a war on Iraq.

Tunisian Terror Incident

The incident at the Tunisian tourist resort of Djerba on April 11, may be that “something bigger.” A tanker truck loaded with liquefied gas exploded at the historic synagogue there, at the moment that a busload of tourists was entering the building. Six Germans and two Frenchmen burned to death on the spot, four Germans died in the days afterward, and numerous others were seriously wounded and may die soon. Although Tunisian officials first tried to play it down as an “unfortunate accident,” there is about a 98% likelihood that it was a terrorist attack. It was clear that the Germans were the target, because if the Jews had been, the terrorist would have struck during the weekend religious services.

This was the biggest terrorist attack on Germans in years. Germany’s chief federal prosecutor, Kay Nehm, has taken over the investigation, and seven specialists of the BKA, the German equivalent of the FBI, have been deployed to Djerba

to investigate.

But the confusion that has been spread by the piecemeal leakage of “information” about the Djerba incident, leaves it still unclear, a week after the explosion, how exactly it occurred and who carried it out. A few hours after the incident, leading German media blamed an “Islamic terrorist group” close to al-Qaeda. But for two days, no group claimed responsibility. On April 13, London-based Arabic media received phone calls from a Tunisian extremist group, al-Nahda, saying that it had carried out the attack to support the Palestinians. But the next day, that group officially declared that it had nothing to do with it. Twenty-four hours later, another group sent faxes to the London and Islamabad offices of Arabic media, containing, first, a statement on “al-Qaeda stationery,” and second, a “last will” of the truck driver, whose name was given as Nizar bin Mohamad Nawar, and who died in the explosion. Then, more confusion ensued:

- On April 16, the BKA made public that it had arrested a German Muslim in Duisburg, who was said to have received a phone call from Djerba, presumably from the truck driver, 30 minutes before the explosion. The driver was said to have lived in Lyon, France. However, French officials instantly declared that no one by that name had ever been registered in Lyon. Later, the Germans released the man, saying that after hours of interrogation, they had found no hard evidence implicating him in either the Djerba incident, or to any Islamic terrorist organization.

- The “phone call” lead began to decompose in short order, as it could not be determined who had tapped the conversation, and why. Was it routine surveillance, as has been done since Sept. 11? Was it done after a tip-off from another agency abroad, such as the CIA or the Israeli Mossad? And, if that was the case, did someone in those agencies have some information beforehand about the terrorist act? Before more questions of this kind could be posed, the authorities announced, after the release of the arrested Duisburg “suspect,” that the phone call contained nothing spectacular at all.

All of this strangely coincides with the opening of the German trial, on April 16, against five Arabs accused of belonging to a “Frankfurt al-Qaeda cell.” They were arrested in December 2000, on charges of having planned a bomb attack on a synagogue in Strasbourg, France. Their case has nothing to do with the atrocities of Sept. 11, nor is it proven yet that they have anything to do with al-Qaeda. But their case points to London, from where they received their instructions and their falsified credit cards; it was when a courier from London arrived in Frankfurt on Dec. 26, 2000, that the entire “cell” was arrested.

As things stand now, only the following points are clear: 1) Certain circles want Germany to become more active in the ongoing war; 2) somebody is desperately, and not very skillfully, concocting a pretext for that; and 3) ten innocent Germans died in Djerba. These are the three main aspects that a serious investigation should focus on.