

Summary of the Article “Camp Germany” published in the November issue of “loyal magazine” by Lorenz Hemicker

In the battle for supremacy in the world, the U.S. attention is directed towards Asia. Since the end of the “Cold War”, they have reduced their military presence in Germany massively. The remaining focus are a hub, a center of leadership and a huge training area.

The prospective [German] medical officer, Lars Hönig, has voluntarily exchanged the auditorium of the University of Mainz with the military training facility in Grafenwöhr in order to attend a training course for the Expert Field Medical Badge. Hönig explains “the badge is like the American ranger badge for paramedics.” The failure rate is 80 percent or more.

The Expert Field Medical Badge is not the only training program of the U.S. Armed Forces in Germany. Today, hundreds of NATO Soldiers and allied armies will be prepared for their missions in Afghanistan by U.S. trainers on large training areas in Germany. Apache helicopters chase across Grafenwöhr. Hundreds of Georgian Soldiers learn to load a Black Hawk helicopter, while Czech Soldiers exercise how to escape from a blown up Humvee. Whether computer simulation, large exercises or special courses, the U.S. armed forces and their partners train in Germany for all the challenges that await the troops in the mission areas.

Training, Support and Command and Control remain the focus of the U.S. Army in “Camp Germany.” The period of the cold war era heavy armies came to an end with this year’s departure of 1AD.

Where years ago the heavy armies of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization simulated the defense against an attack by the Warsaw Pact, light formations now train urban warfare, battle simulation of IED explosion or the care of wounded.

Colonel Curtis J. Carson, Chief of Staff, JMTC said not without pride “our training command is the largest and most modern in the Army outside the United States.” Many instructors complement, it is the most advanced ever.

The Upper Palatinate has no similarity with the Afghan desert or with Iraqi cities. The Iraq veteran Carson has a simple answer to the question why the Americans have not moved on to build training facilities elsewhere “We are here now and have been here for quite a while,” he said.

The Pentagon has since 1945 invested huge sums in its installations in Germany. Without significant advantages it makes little sense to built these structures elsewhere. The Americans don’t have these favorable conditions in the America-friendly states of Eastern Europe or in the Arabian states near the areas of operations. Carson indicated an additional difference “Without us, many armies in Europe would have no such

training opportunities, including the Bundeswehr.” The latter trained last year nearly 80,000 “man-days” in Grafenwöhr.

It is undisputed that the German armed forces benefit from the training cooperation with the Americans, especially for Afghanistan. One example is the training of military advisers to Afghanistan (OMLT) which ends in a joint exercise in Grafenwöhr. The [German] federal government still considers the U.S. as the most important strategic and military-political allies. In northern Afghanistan, the Bundeswehr depends on American support for combat helicopters, transport of wounded, special forces, and the abolishment of IEDs. On the other hand, the Americans benefit from the fact that they are welcome in Germany unlike other parts of the world.

In 2007, the Pentagon saw how big the reservations about the U.S. sometimes are in other countries, when it searched the African continent for a suitable location for its new regional command. All eligible States granted the Americans a denial. Since 2008 “AFRICOM” is now located in Stuttgart next to “EUCOM” the command of the U.S. Armed Forces in Europe.

There are currently 52,000 U.S. Soldiers stationed in Germany, after Afghanistan the second largest U.S. military contingent outside the U.S. By 2015, this number will be reduced to approximately 48,000 U.S. Soldiers. Of the former 50 main bases, approximately one dozen installations will remain. In the future the U.S. troops will focus around three centers of gravity, the training area in Grafenwöhr, the military airbase in Ramstein near Kaiserslautern and the new army headquarters in Wiesbaden. In April, the Pentagon announced that one of the three remaining combat brigades in Germany will return to the United States in 2015. Whether this is the end of reduction is yet to be seen.

President Obama has hinted several times that in the “Pacific Century” Europe is no longer the center of geopolitical interests of his country. In the wake of the dramatic budget situation, there are increasing voices in Washington requesting further significant cuts of the troop presence in Europe.

In the political and media perception of the German-American relationship one [fact] is often overlooked: Europe remains the most reliable and most skilled partner for the U.S. “86 percent of our coalition forces in Afghanistan come from our European allies and partner countries,” said Colonel Carson.

The Pentagon has invested 700 million Euro in the past ten years in the Grafenwöhr Garrison. This doesn’t look like an action to take if you are planning on leaving.

Meanwhile Lars Hönig is back at the University in Mainz, he has missed the medical badge literally at the last minute, next year he wants to try again.