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Anti-war activists in Germany protest NATO's 'Air Defender 23' military exercise

written by Peoples Dispatch

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Around 10,000 military personnel and 250 aircraft from 25 countries are participating in NATO's 'Air Defender 23' exercise scheduled from June 12-23. Anti-war groups have called it a provocation



Protest by Die Linke. Photo via Dei Linke/Mecklenburg-Vorpommern

On June 10, hundreds of activists from various anti-imperialist and anti-war groups as well as the Communist Party of Germany (DKP) marched to the Wunstorf Air Base in Hannover to [protest](#) the NATO's Air Defender 2023 exercise scheduled from June 12-June 23. A vigil was also held at the Spangdahlem Air Base near Trier, which will also serve as a base for the exercise. Die Linke organized protests against the NATO exercise on June 11. The protestors denounced war-mongering and projection of military might by NATO amid the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war and demanded a ceasefire and peace negotiations in Ukraine, as well as removal of US nuclear weapons from Germany. The airpower drill is likely to cause civil aviation delays in Germany.

According to reports, around 10,000 military personnel and 250 military aircraft from 25 NATO countries will participate in the exercise to showcase their capabilities in the backdrop of the ongoing Ukrainian counteroffensive against

Russia. Peace groups have warned that the NATO maneuver will likely escalate the conflict in Ukraine and increase tensions in the region. Fierce battles are currently ongoing in southern and eastern Ukraine. However, despite the arms, ammunition and funds it has received, Ukraine has not been able to make any significant breakthrough on the Russian front lines. Ukraine is now waiting for US-made F-16 fighter jets from its allies in the European Union (EU) to use in its counter-offensive.

According to many observers, Air Defender 2023 is intended as a warning to Russia. However, many sections of the population in EU countries including in Germany are unhappy with the prolonged war and bids by NATO-EU to escalate the conflict. The inflation and energy crisis triggered by the war remains unabated and millions across Europe are struggling to cope. The defense budget has increased manifold in several EU nations alongside heavy cuts in social spending. Germany itself slipped into a recession following a steep contraction in its economy since the last quarter of crisis-ridden 2022. It is facing an acute energy crisis due to sanctions on cheap Russian oil.

On June 9, Vincent Cziesla [wrote](#) in *Unsere Zeit* (UZ) that Air Defender 23 is not an exercise, but seems like a brazen but usual provocation, and is a tangible danger to world peace in times of war. “An accident with a Russian military aircraft, misguided navigation, or pilot error can be enough to make a training flight seem like an act of attack.”

“It will be particularly threatening if Ukraine were to use the slipstream of the maneuver to carry out attacks, while Russian air surveillance is forced to follow NATO activities. Currently, there is almost daily shelling of Russian territory, and the Ukrainian president is threatening major attacks. The potential for escalation of a Ukrainian military strike while NATO jets patrol nearby is obvious in this situation,” Cziesla added.

Die Linke [stated](#) on June 12, “today, the NATO-air weapons maneuver ‘Air Defender

2023' begins over Germany. It's the largest air force maneuver since NATO. This military saber rattling is irresponsible! We will not adapt to war and the military as tools of foreign policy. Right now, when another war is raging in Europe, de-escalation and diplomacy are the order of the hour—not upgrading, military demonstrations of power, and fueling the escalation spiral.”

Source: [Peoples Dispatch](#)

