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## Germany exports massive amounts of arms, hypocrisy

By Josef Joffe  
September 22, 2014

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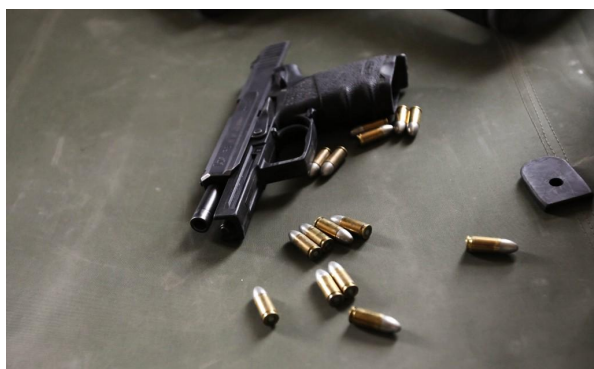
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Who is the world's No. 3 arms exporter, after the United States and Russia? Surprise. It is Germany, a country bound by law to supply only allies and peaceable folks like (neutral) Switzerland or Sweden. Off limits are "areas of tension" — bad neighborhoods that actually need the stuff.

Yet somehow, Israel and Saudi Arabia, both living in the world's powder keg, are among Germany's best customers. So are Algeria, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates.

What doesn't go directly finds its way on the international arms bazaar. Consider, no self-respecting drug czar — Russian or Mexican — would flaunt a Czech-made "Skorpion." It has to be a Heckler & Koch MP-5, also much beloved by U.S. Special Operations forces.



But never, ever has Germany delivered to nonstate forces. This month marks a profound break with that tradition. Germany has agreed to send weapons to the Kurdish Workers' Party, or PKK, a military and political group in northern Iraq, with the bulk of more sophisticated arms going to the peshmerga forces. Not exactly buddies, these two outfits are fighting the Islamic State.

The Kurdish Workers' Party is due to receive 8,000 G3 assault rifles — almost museum pieces — that were issued to the German armed forces in 1959. The peshmerga forces get more recent hardware: 8,000 G36, the current rifle of the German army. Plus 30 antitank systems with 500 missiles. Add in a few tens of shoulder-held antitank rockets, 40 machine guns and 10,000 hand grenades. The package is worth about \$90 million.

Not much compared to those modern U.S. weapons — tanks, artillery — that Islamic State militants have [amassed by plundering Iraqi depots](#). But it is still a dramatic break with precedent.

Chalk it up to Islamic State. Every time this killer brigade murders a Western hostage, it enlarges the U.S.-led coalition. Britain, for example, refused to bomb along in Syria, making President Barack Obama desist. Now its combat planes will join the battle.

Will German troops do so, too? Don't hold your breath.

### AUTHOR PROFILE



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Josef Joffe teaches U.S. foreign policy at Stanford, where he is also a fellow of the Institute for International Studies and the Hoover Institution. His latest book is "The Myth of America's Decline."

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Consider the modest arms deliveries

as a *substitute* for intervention — a time-honored tradition of nations that would rather not march and fight. Germany has flown along over Serbia during the Bosnia wars, and it has dispatched ground troops to Afghanistan. But compared to the fierce German onslaughts in World War One and Two, today's Germany is as aggressive as a pussycat.

Evidently, losing two wars, and losing them big, does not favor a warrior culture. Today, Germans are as pacific as the Swedes — the scourge of Europe in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

But it isn't all about remorse and redemption. Far weightier is the fact that postwar West Germany could enjoy a comfortable existence under the U.S. strategic umbrella and its North Atlantic Treaty Organization allies. At the height of the Cold War, 300, 000 U.S. troops were deployed to Western Europe, together with thousands of tactical nuclear weapons. Half a dozen other nations were also part of the "forward defense" close to the Iron Curtain that cut Germany into East and West.

West Germany, the "Federal Republic," could enjoy the fruits of peace Made in U.S.A. It was safety on the cheap. Whereas the United States, Britain and France devoted from 5 percent to 6 percent of gross domestic product to defense, the Germans could get away with less than 3 percent. Today, Germany is heading toward 1.3 percent.

The upshot is this: Even if the Germans wanted to intervene in Iraq, they could not. Their ground troops have shrunk to 60,000. They do not have the projection forces: ships, tankers, air transport. They don't have space-based surveillance systems, nor the special forces that are replacing classical armies in the theater — as Washington demonstrates. Germany does still have two squadrons each of "Tornado" and "Typhoon" fighter/ground-attack aircraft. These, however, would have to be refueled by U.S. tankers.

Given how quickly the NATO allies ran out bombs in Libya, the United States would also have stand ready to replenish German stocks of airborne precision munitions. Yet the Germans could theoretically join the British and French on bombing missions against Islamic State fighters. Right now, that is a no-no, so arms deliveries are acting as a nice substitute.

But remember the rule: Islamic State has turned out to be the West's best coalition builder. Secretary of State John Kerry has had a reasonably easy time to harness the willing.

As the most recent murder of a British aid worker shows, Islamic State is unlikely to end this horror soon. It is part of the plan. Assume, for example, a German is slaughtered on YouTube. Though the German public is now strongly anti-involvement, they may recoil in righteous anger. Such grisly events turn moods and long-held convictions.

If so, German bombs might follow the surplus weapons into Iraq.

*PHOTO (TOP): A MG3 automatic weapon that is part of a German military aid shipment for Kurdish forces in Northern Iraq is on display for the media at a storage facility of the Bundeswehr armed forces in Waren, north of Berlin, September 18, 2014. REUTERS/Thomas Peter*

*PHOTO (INSERT 1): The Heckler & Koch P8 pistol of a German Bundeswehr army soldier with the 3rd company of the Quick Reaction Force QRF is pictured in a combat outpost in Chahar Dara district in the outskirts of Kunduz, northern Afghanistan, May 10, 2010. REUTERS/Fabrizio Bensch*

*A German Bundeswehr army soldier of the 263rd paratroops unit of the International Security Assistance Force mans his weapon atop of a Fuchs armoured personnel carrier in the camp before leaving for a night mission in Kunduz, October 2, 2008. REUTERS/Fabrizio Bensch*

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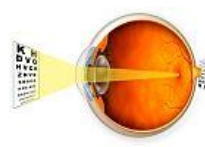
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