

U.S. Marines Train German and Moroccan Troops on How to Operate Drones in North Africa

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Recently, U.S. Marines conducted a “small unmanned-flying vehicle familiarization course” in a military exercise that involved U.S. Moroccan and German militaries in a yearly exercise called *Exercise African Lion 13* in Agadir, Morocco. The German military participated in the exercise for the first time.

The exercise involved the RQ-11B Raven known as the “Raven-B”. The Raven-B is a lightweight drone that is hand-held. It would provide the military with reconnaissance, surveillance, and target suspected enemies throughout the world. In a AFRICOM press release ‘U.S., Moroccan, German Service Members Conduct UAV Familiarization’, Sgt. Clayton J. LaGessee, a Marine intelligence specialist said

“The Moroccan and German soldiers went through a quick brief on Small Unmanned Aerial Systems and a flight simulator to get more familiarization with the aircraft.” The drone has numerous capabilities that can be used for both offensive and defensive purposes. AFRICOM states that *“An important aspect of the Raven-B is that it provides small units with situational awareness and can be employed in all environments for direct or general reconnaissance as well as offensive and defensive force-protection operations.”*

Germany is a member of NATO and Morocco is one of the oldest US allies that had secret CIA prisons used to torture suspected Al-Qaeda members. Russia Today reported the controversial practices conducted by the CIA this past February in an article titled ‘54 countries helped CIA to kidnap, detain and torture – report’ stated that *“There are grave reports of torture documented in Morocco. Detainees described torture over several months. One individual, Binyam Mohamed, was transferred by the CIA to Morocco in July 2002, “where his interrogators broke his bones while beating him, sliced his genitals, poured hot liquid onto his penis while cutting it, and threatened him with rape, electrocution and death.”*

The collaboration between the United States, Germany, Morocco and other NATO member states such as France will use Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) or drones for future interventions in Northern Africa. The US already has a drone base in Niger that will target West Africa. Morocco is in Northwest Africa. *“Exercise African Lion 13 is an annually-scheduled military engagement promoting partnership between the U.S. and Moroccan forces and is the largest exercise of its kind on the continent. For the first time, members of the Federation of German Armed Forces participated in a geospatial portion of the*

exercise.” The United States and France has a presence in Africa. Is Germany the next Western power interested in Africa’s natural resources? *Deutsche Welle (DW)*, a German international broadcaster published an article in 2012 called ‘Africa’s boom sparks German interests’ stated “As Africa continues its strong economic growth, a growing number of German companies are looking at investing in the continent amid growing international competition for Africa’s resources and markets.” Can the German government collaborate with the United States and France and exploit Africa for its natural resources? DW stated its case for German involvement in Africa:

However, Germany needs to make sure it doesn’t get left behind. China has become Africa’s biggest trade partner. Competition to do business in Africa is stronger today than ever before, the chairman of the German-African Business Association, Stefan Liebing, said in an interview with DW. He pointed out that public and private companies from China, India and Brazil are becoming increasingly involved in the continent.

The question remains whether Germany would follow China’s path and build relationships with African governments across the continent or follow the path of the American and French governments which have been a disaster for Africa. With NATO’s invasion of Libya by the Obama administration and the French invasion of Mali ordered by President Francois Hollande, Germany can easily follow their Western partners down the same path. According to the AFRICOM report “The partnerships, whether it’s air, ground, or command-level, is forming bonds and bringing more cohesion between our militaries,” said LaGesse. “It’s vital to our friendships with [international] militaries, should we have a contingency effort and we ever need to work together.” Germany is a member of NATO. They can use their military power to invade an African nation with US support. Can it happen? Yes, but not in the near future. If Germany needs natural resources for its corporations, then the US and France has a new partner.

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