

Report from Bonn by Rainer Apel

A 'regional crisis spot' called Europe

A broad-scale reactivation of Soviet irregular warfare against NATO has begun.

Every revival of superpower summitry on the "regional crisis spots" sees a re-escalation of crises, of sabotage and assassination. This pattern can be observed in all traditional hot crisis spots now, like Central America, Angola, Afghanistan, Vietnam, Korea, and it also appears in Europe.

Suddenly, all known Soviet proxies relaunched irregular warfare throughout Europe. The closer the Moscow summit between Gorbachov and Reagan gets, the more intense the pattern of sabotage, arson, assassination. Moscow is out to expose vulnerable flanks of the West, create irritation, and increase the price the West pays for summit agreements.

This round of irregular warfare has the psy-war effect of proving that NATO's military infrastructure in Europe can be disrupted without having the regular Red Army fire a single shot, launch any missile, deploy any tanks or aircraft.

On April 26, an arson attack destroyed NATO's biggest spare parts depot in Europe at Donnington, U.K., causing damage of \$170 million. A similar fire destroyed a good part of the same depot five years ago; it happened again, flouting NATO capabilities to preempt sabotage.

On April 27, five homemade bombs destroyed railway tracks near Hedemünden, northern Germany. A U.S. troop train with 31 GIs was stopped, and the engineer injured by metal splinters. At the same site, a similar sabotage attack barely missed a U.S. train in September 1987.

In the early morning of May 1, the British Army on the Rhine (BAOR)

was hit, when three of its soldiers were killed during a weekend vacation in the Netherlands. In the city of Rörmond, one soldier was killed when his private car was machine-gunned by terrorists, and in Nieuw-Bergen, two more soldiers were killed when a bomb blew up their car.

All BAOR posts in Germany, the British embassy in Bonn, and consulates in the larger cities were put on a special anti-terror alert immediately, with additional guards and light armored vehicles deployed. These static measures provided no protection against irregular warfare, as was shown on May 2, when a routine patrol at the Bielefeld headquarters base of the British 1st Army Corps detected a suspicious car with British license plates. A check of the car by specialists produced an explosive device, which was promptly defused. "It was great luck for us to find the bomb before it detonated," the press quoted a British officer.

Indeed. But the question remains, how it was possible for terrorists to get this car into the base in the first place? Hadn't there been tight ID controls at the entrance? Apparently, the affair also had a demonstrative character, to irk the British to the utmost by involving Irish Republican Army terrorists. In the case of Bielefeld, as well as in Rörmond and Nieuw-Bergen, the IRA claimed direct responsibility for the attacks, and announced more to come.

The IRA may consist of Irishmen, but it is a Soviet front-group, infiltrated and rebuilt by the Soviet GRU in the 1960s, to be used by the Kremlin in Britain and Northern Ireland, and

wherever British troops are stationed in Europe.

German anti-terror specialists pointed out that if IRA terrorists were behind these attacks, they certainly had logistical support from German terrorist groups, like the Red Army Faction. As Heinrich Boge, the director of the German anti-terror police unit (BKA), reported on May 3, there is evidence that close contact exists between the RAF, the IRA, the Basque terrorists of the ETA in Spain, and other groups in Europe. Under whatever pretext, any of these groups can be activated alone or in coordination, against any particular member of NATO in Europe.

The current wave of "terrorist" attacks looks like a test-run of a Europe-wide capability for irregular warfare which Moscow has built up over the past few years. Moscow's role in protecting this terror network is very direct: Members of the above-mentioned groups who need to escape police search in Europe, fly to Nicaragua and other hideouts in Central America via Moscow's state airline Aeroflot, preferably leaving from East Berlin or Prague.

The lesson for NATO from the first round of "terrorist" attacks in this new phase of escalation is that static defense does not work. Unless a formal state of war against terrorism is declared, the manpower required to protect all sensitive military sites and the basic infrastructure against sabotage is not available.

But there is also a weak flank of Soviet irregular warfare: It very much depends on a broad network of political support in Europe, which performs shelter and safehouse functions for the terrorists. This dense infrastructure of extremist groups, publications, and centers can be cleaned out and disrupted—which is what NATO should do immediately.