

2019/3/2 (EN): Air forces in asymmetric missions

Air forces in asymmetric missions

„The development of air power" (part 1)

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According to press reports, in mid-January 2017 the US Air Force bombed several camps of the so-called "Islamic State" (IS) in Libya in order to specifically impact on persons who had been directly involved in or contributed to assassinations. The two deployed strategic long-range bombers of the type B-2 SPIRIT took off on a military airport in the US Federal State Missouri (Whiteman Air Force Base) and flew more than 10.000 kilometres across the Atlantic to the place of action in North Africa. The air raid in the night from 18th to 19th was directed to several positions of the IS terrorist organisation in the southwest of the town Sirte in the Libvan Desert. There, the US warplanes dropped the bombs on previously assigned targets, which, according to information of the US Department of Defence, led to the death of more than 80 IS-fighters. In these desert regions IS-fighters are said to have stayed who before had fled there from a former Jihadist stronghold.

The B-2 SPIRIT Stealth bomber is a strategic aircraft exclusively used by the United States Air Force (USAF). Its peculiarity is its special construction which makes it much more difficult to be spotted by radar and engaged than a conventionally built bomber. This makes the B-2 SPIRIT by far the most expensive warplane of the world. The projection of airpower as an indispensable and important military component of measures in the portfolio of the Instruments of Power has actually taken a new position since the 1990ies. The necessary systemic changes within the armed forces, however, have not been finished so far. On the contrary, they are in need of constant inclusion of national endeavours oriented towards both the interior and the exterior. To sum up, the following components can be allocated to the ancestral possibilities of action of airpower, which can support the political objectives (achieving strategic effects by coercion) with both emphasis and flexibility:

- compellence,
- punishment,
- denying,
- decapitation, and
- impact in asymmetric challenges.

In the following sequel of the paper „Air forces in asymmetric missions" the area of themes "Reflections on Air Power" will be provided. There the current adaptive efforts of air power as well as both critical aspects of the vital areas of air forces and of the relations network between military and air power will be discussed.

