

## Fired NATO general warned of spetsnaz

On Oct. 28, in a brief press release, the Netherlands' Ministry of Defense announced the dismissal of Lt.-Gen. Gerard Berkhof of the Dutch Army as chief of staff of Allied Forces Central Europe (AFCENT), stating that "his way of functioning" apparently made him incompatible with his commander, General L. Chalupa of the West German Bundeswehr. The move, unprecedented since the 1984 dismissal of former NATO deputy commander General Kiesling for suspicion of being a homosexual (a charge of which he was later exonerated), has led to speculation as to the real motives for General Berkhof's dismissal.

On Nov. 8, General Berkhof charged that his dismissal was because of his fear that the AFCENT Headquarters, in the city of Brunsum, near the West German border in the Netherlands, was vulnerable to Soviet spetsnaz attack. In an interview in three leading Dutch weeklies, General Berkhof remarked that he had been in the midst of an investigation of Soviet plans to sabotage the headquarters through infiltrating spetsnaz troops into abandoned coal mining tunnels that criss-cross underneath the base, no more than 10 meters below the surface.

The tunnels, he charged, are accessible from outside the base, and only a thin brick wall would block intruders from reaching right into the center of the NATO facility. AFCENT headquarters is the command and control center for NATO's Central Front, encompassing all American, British, Dutch, Belgian, and German troops on the crucial West German front.

### Berkhof backed SDI

Although the interview was published throughout the Dutch press very little has appeared elsewhere, prompting rumors throughout NATO and West European defense circles as to the real cause for his ouster. The fact that General Berkhof is a leading advocate of the Strategic Defense Initiative in Western Europe, a position that made him unpopular in certain high political circles in The Hague as well as other European capitals. In his interview, the general reasserted that maintaining NATO as an effective deterrent depends on SDI development.

A review of the general's charges as well as *EIR's* independent investigation reveals a story which is of utmost concern for NATO security and readiness. Berkhof stated that,

as chief of staff, the security of the headquarters was his responsibility, and he had begun reviewing security measures at once. A search of NATO's security files yielded no information on Soviet spetsnaz. He began an independent inquiry, and found that infiltration of Western military objectives via tunnels is coordinated under the 16th directorate of the KGB. Further probing revealed that the Soviets and other Warsaw Pact military forces have many specialized sabotage units coming under the generic term "spetsnaz."

Military intelligence experts have identified a pre-war "first echelon" of spetsnaz, consisting of some 350 groups with 8-12 men each, and specialized in some 10 distinct mission-assignment categories. Among these were special tunneling units.

There are 2.5 million former coal miners of Polish background in the coal mining region in the Netherlands and West Germany. Infiltration of this community by Polish intelligence and spetsnaz units is well known to Dutch intelligence. There is also a very active Polish consulate not far from Brunsum, which has a sister city relationship with a city in Poland, with many exchange programs. Organized crime networks of East Europeans are also known to manage several brothels in the region, frequented by NATO personnel. General Berkhof charges that when he began to identify the possibility of East European spetsnaz units, his commander, as well as other senior officers, moved for his dismissal.

Although the official statement by NATO and SHAPE (Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe) was a simple "no comment," a Dutch Defense Ministry spokesman admitted that the security issue was involved. They claim that they had told General Berkhof to refrain from public comments. An inspection by the Netherlands Ministry of Mines of the mine entrances only two weeks before his removal revealed that they had been recently forced open, a task requiring at least 10 hours of work and the penetration of a concrete wall, and tunneling through 5-6 meters of sand and another concrete wall which serves to plug the entry shaft. Although the thin break wall that blocks entry into the tunnels underneath the headquarters itself was not penetrated, the discovered penetration, no more than three weeks old, was the third such break-in since the mine was shut in 1975.

The general's charges on spetsnaz capabilities against NATO have been reinforced by a report recently drawn up by the German Defense Ministry, reporting that the Soviets have 4,000 spetsnaz troops prepared to conduct sabotage operations throughout West Germany. These units, in the event of a Warsaw Pact attack on NATO's Central Front, would coordinate with so-called Operational Maneuver Groups which would target key NATO command and control centers such as AFCENT in Brunsum. The fact that sabotage operations are being conducted now, is reflected in reports of attempts to penetrate the secret bunkers containing emergency war materiel along the East German border over the last several months.