

German government plans massive rearmament

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The German coalition government has put forward its proposals for the federal budget in 2015, demanding a massive increase in heavy weaponry for the German army (Bundeswehr).

As a pretext for the rearmament program, government spokesmen are citing the civil war in Ukraine, which was set in motion by the support of the US and Germany for the fascist-led coup that overthrew the elected pro-Russian government and installed a Western puppet regime last February.

According to Reuters, German defense experts headed by Henning Otte (Christian Democratic Union—CDU) and Rainer Arnold (Social Democratic Party—SPD) have complained that, in light of the “current security situation,” the Bundeswehr has an insufficient number of tanks. They call for a significant increase and modernization of the army’s current stock of 190 “Boxer” armoured vehicles and 225 Leopard combat tanks.

Their plans also include the development of a new, third generation of Leopard tanks. They argue that equipping troops with the latest technology as part of the government’s “Soldier of the Future” program should no longer be limited to foreign deployments, but should be introduced across the board.

They insist on the development of a new generation of MEADS air defense systems to replace the army’s existing stock of US Patriot missiles. The Defense Department had postponed a decision for next year. According to Reuters, citing an unnamed government official, the green light for the program is to be given next year after a few technical and legal issues have been resolved.

The ostensible rationale for the new MEADS system is the need to replace antiquated equipment. However, comments by Bavarian Prime Minister Horst Seehofer (Christian Social Union—CSU) indicate that other strategic

considerations are involved in the development and financing of new air defense technology.

According to *Bundeswehr Journal*, during a visit to the German armaments company MBDA two weeks ago, Seehofer said the army needed German-made weaponry with “systems capabilities.” With its high-tech development programs such as MEADS, Seehofer continued, MBDA demonstrated what was possible and what was necessary for the “sustainable equipping of our army.”

Last April, Rainer Arnold published a document stressing the need “to secure air defense as a special German focus and make it sustainable, drawing on the results of the MEADS development program.” Initially, France and the US were involved in MEADS together with Germany and Italy. France, however, withdrew from the project to develop the SAMP/T air defense system. In 2011, the United States announced it would provide no further funding and would continue to rely on the Patriot system.

In a much-publicized speech in early October on the guidelines for Germany’s arms exports, Economics Minister Sigmar Gabriel urged that armaments policy be subordinated to German foreign policy and the construction of a powerful army. “Foreign and security policy must be the starting and end point of a strategy to rearm Germany—and, wherever possible, Europe,” he said.

The proposals put forward by Defense Department officials show that the demand for a change in arms policy is not to remain in the sphere of theory. The officials are insisting on a massive increase in defense spending. “The global security environment requires a rethink about the importance of the Bundeswehr—also in terms of finance,” Reuters wrote in its article on the plans advanced by the government.

According to media reports, the Defence Committee of

the Bundestag (parliament), which meets in closed session, dealt with the issues of “defense budget/Section 14, military procurement, defense technology development” when it convened on October 15 in Berlin. In November, the Budget Committee of the Bundestag will decide on the requests from the Defense Committee.

Recent weeks have seen a torrent of articles in the German press regarding the alleged “breakdown” and “ailing” condition of the army. This campaign is continuing unabated.

In a recent issue of *Handelsblatt*, Defence Minister Ursula von der Leyen (CDU) and Tom Enders, chief of the Airbus aerospace and defense corporation, blamed one another for the supposed “armaments disaster.” In the article, Enders complained that “in no other major European country” was the “antagonism between the defense industry and politics” so pronounced as in Germany.

Using a host of statistics and quotes, the authors of the article argued for higher military spending. As a prime example, they cited the production and financing history of the Airbus A400M military transporter. The avarice of the defense contractors and the unwillingness of taxpayers to pick up the tab, they claimed, were responsible for the “equipment deficits.” The Airbus CEO commented, “We have accepted conditions we should not have to accept.” The miserly funding of the project, he charged, had cost Airbus more than €4 billion.

The conclusion drawn by the *Handelsblatt* authors was: “Despite all the blame, both sides know: the Bundeswehr needs money for new equipment as quickly as possible because the old stuff is just rusting away.”

Following the announcement by the German government at the start of the year that the era of military restraint after the Second World War was at an end, the ruling class is agitating aggressively for the Bundeswehr to be transformed into a powerful offensive force capable of realizing Germany’s great power ambitions.



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