

German military experts demand purchase of drones

Johannes Stern
3 February 2015

According to a report in the *Welt am Sonntag* newspaper, German security officials and military experts are urging the rapid purchase of armed drones.

The defence policy spokesman for the Christian Democratic Union-Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU) fraction in parliament, Henning Otte, told the newspaper, “Last year, we initiated a debate about the necessity of combat-ready drones and clearly spoke out in favour of this capability.” He went on to say that it was now time “to take the next step and secure drones with this capacity for the German army.”

The defence spokesman for the CSU, Florian Hahn, expressed a similar view. He said that Defence Minister Ursula von der Leyen (CDU) had to “urgently take the decision this year.”

The drones were “a key question for our sovereignty in defence policy and a key capability for a modern, efficient army,” he continued. Other problems in defence policy, such as the supply of A400M transport aircraft, should not result in “a decision on the purchase of a drone being set aside,” Hahn added.

According to *Die Welt*, the Social Democrats (SPD) are also stepping up pressure on von der Leyen. “We expect the minister to make this decision quickly,” Rainer Arnold, the SPD’s defence spokesman, was cited by the paper as saying.

High-ranking military officials are supporting the calls from politicians. The chairman of the Bundeswehr (German army) association, Lieutenant Colonel Andre Wüstner, referring to current crises in Africa, Syria and Iraq, declared that future conflicts would be carried out by means of drones. The Defence Ministry had to finally begin purchasing and developing combat drones, he insisted.

The Air Force inspector, Lieutenant General Karl Müller, warned that if Germany did not develop its own

drones, it would be internationally dependent.

According to *Welt am Sonntag*, the purchase of military drones is no longer a question of if, but when. A spokesman for the Defence Ministry said a policy was being worked on.

The newspaper claimed that €323 million in a secret part of the defence budget had been “allocated for the purchase of three combat-ready aircraft and two ground control stations.” The options being considered, according to *Die Welt*, are the Israeli model “Heron TP” and the US “Predator B.” In the medium term, the development of a European drone was the goal.

Germany’s move to acquire combat drones exposes the lies of the media and politicians that the German ruling class and its military have been forced to wage war in defence of human rights and democracy. Drones epitomize the US-led criminal wars of conquest around the world.

Washington has deployed drones mainly in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia and Yemen. According to research by the London-based Bureau of Investigative Journalists, the US military and CIA have already claimed the lives of between 2,400 and 3,900 people in Pakistan alone through the use of drones. Victims of the targeted killings, which are personally approved by President Obama, are often women and children. Often they are guests at birthday parties or weddings targeted for drone attack.

The *Bild* newspaper recently revealed that Germany has been more broadly involved in such methods of warfare (which are illegal under international law) than had previously been reported. Extensive documents from the German army and foreign intelligence service (BND) confirm that Major General Markus Kneip, who commanded Germany’s ISAF troops in Afghanistan and today is head of the strategy and deployment

department of the Defence Ministry, personally selected individual targets for the US targeted killing programme.

The purchase of drones would give the German military the ability to conduct its own targeted killings. Although the vast majority of Germans oppose this illegal practice, plans for the development of a military drone program have for some time been systematically developed behind the backs of the population.

Already in 2009, the CDU/Free Democratic Party (FDP) government stated in its coalition agreement that it was “essential” to carry out “the sustainable development and expansion of independent national capabilities—in particular, future aircraft systems.” In the summer of 2012, then-Defence Minister and current Interior Minister Thomas de Maizière described drones as “ethically neutral weapons.” Shortly afterwards, a strategy paper entitled “Air Power 2030” was published by the Air Force that called for the development of drone technology.

“The utilisation and further development of the capabilities of unmanned aerial vehicle systems is to be optimised in all areas of surveillance-directing-impact and support, and their scope of deployment expanded,” the paper stated. The Air Force intended, according to the report, “to invest in these programmes so important for the future because we are convinced that the German army can thereby be strengthened as a whole.” The Air Force would increase “the capacity to act and the efficiency of the entire German military system” so that it could contribute “flexibly and globally at any time to German army deployments.”

Since German President Joachim Gauck and other politicians announced Germany’s return to an aggressive great power foreign policy at the beginning of last year, a systematic campaign has been waged in the media in favour of the purchase of these instruments of murder. Particularly prominent in this campaign has been Humboldt University Professor Herfried Münkler.

In June, he told public broadcaster ARD’s “Mittagmagazin” (Mid-day Magazine): “The wars of the future will be a mixture of classical wars and more modern police interventions. Drones will play an increasing role in this policing role of the military.”

He went on to say that drones were “very well equipped for such police-style missions, certainly better

than combat helicopters, bombers and possibly also light infantry.”

He continued: “I think one has to realise that the development of combat-readiness on many levels is coming. Geopolitical factors play a role in this, demographics, how many young men do you have, i.e., how many victims can be risked, technological developments, tactical innovations, strategic ideas.”

He added that “Post-heroic societies like ours, societies that are not held together by particular ideals of masculinity, by the ideas of honour and sacrifice” were dependent upon “using technological assistance as a crutch to secure the capacity to act on the military level.”

In a further interview with the provocative title “To Proscribe Drones Would Be Absurd,” Münkler said incompetence in security policy was being defended by invoking morality.

German history was also a problem, he noted. Due to “an intense feeling of guilt,” Germans were adverse to developing a “heightened responsibility” to “engage in those places where something like genocide is taking place,” he declared. He complained that “because Germany stood at the centre of two world wars,” ordinary Germans were inclined “to fold their hands and do nothing.”



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact