

German government increases defence budget by €8 billion

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Germany will increase and massively upgrade defence spending through 2019 according to key points in the 2016 budget and fiscal plan adopted Tuesday by the German cabinet. The military will be allocated some €8 billion more than previously planned over the next four years.

At the beginning of the month, Finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble announced that the military budget would not be increased until 2017. Now, just days later, the budget is to increase by €1.2 billion as early as next year. The budget was originally expected to be reduced by approximately €500 million. The adopted increase means it will be €1.7 billion higher than previously planned. Defence spending is then expected to increase incrementally to more than €35 billion by 2019.

The rapid boost to military spending, amounting to an increase of more than 6.2 percent, heralds a new stage in the return of German militarism. After a months-long media campaign calling for the upgrade and further foreign deployment of the military, the government has seized the opportunity to act.

According to the key issues document leaked to the media, the additional expenditures provide for, among other things, “an increased NATO engagement.” Germany is playing a leading role in the buildup of NATO in eastern Europe directed against Russia. It will participate in the newly established Very High Readiness Joint Task Force with up to 2,700 soldiers who can be made operational within a 48-hour period.

Since the beginning of this year, leadership of the Rapid Response Force (NRF) has rested with the 1 German-Netherlands Corp in Münster. According to the official web site of the German military, 4,000 German soldiers committed to the NRF were certified last year as “combat ready.” At the core of the German troops of the NRF is Armored Infantry Battalion 371 from Marienberg, which has been prepared for “treaty-obligated deployment”

since the end of 2013.

The NATO buildup in eastern Europe is not the only project to be financed with the new funds. The German elite are constructing an army with which they can defend their geostrategic and economic interests worldwide. Another point in the key issues document is euphemistically called “additional expenditures globally for investments in our future” and estimated to cost a further €300 million per year.

In its latest edition, the weekly German newspaper *Die Zeit* called the long-planned and now successful increase of the defence budget “a new era in fiscal policy.” That means: “The resources should above all flow into those departments relevant to ‘future tasks’. According to the finance ministry, these are education, transportation—and in light of geopolitical challenges, defence and development cooperation. On the other hand, when necessary, social spending should be spared.”

In other words: the working class must bear the cost of militarism in two respects. They are to be cannon fodder for the “future tasks” of war, and they must endure further cuts to social spending to finance the military buildup. At the same time, the apparatus of state repression will be built up in order to militarise society in face of the opposition of the overwhelming majority of the population.

In addition to the military, the intelligence and security agencies are also to be expanded. The police force, the Federal Criminal Office, and the Office for the Protection of the Constitution (German intelligence agency) are together expected to gain 750 new posts and €328 million from 2016 to 2019. The allocation for the Department of the Interior will also climb by 6.7 percent to €6.6 billion next year. More than €200 million will flow directly into the facilities of the police and the Office for the Protection of the Constitution.

There can be no doubt that the increases to the

departments of interior and defence are only the beginning of a far more comprehensive buildup. The German elite are presently working on a new, aggressive foreign policy strategy under the auspices of the so-called White Paper 2016, in which interventions by the German military play a central role.

The first meeting of the task force “Perspectives of the Military” made clear the direction in which things are headed. The leader of the group, journalist Thomas Wiegold, said, in a video clip produced by the military, that they will make recommendations about “which long-term capabilities the military requires or...how this horsepower can be put to use on the road.” He said that he could not imagine, however, “that we already have boxes to check off today in which we say that we must have this many tanks, this many rockets and this many new capabilities.”

André Wüstner, the chair of the German Army Association (Bundeswehr Association) greeted the increase to the defence budget as “a very good day for Germany.” He had earlier demanded before the Munich Security Conference that German forces achieve “full operational readiness” and “be prepared for war.”

Wüstner said he was “very happy that the government recognised the signs of the times and will now make considerable adjustments. The defence policy framework of our time, the crisis in Ukraine, Northern Iraq and in Syria, require urgent investment. That goes for the necessary reorganisation of infrastructure as well as for the sorely needed purchasing of equipment.”

The focus should not only be on “the great defence projects,” Wüstner added. Just as important are the “little procurement measures that are only for training, exercise and the basic requirements that are important for achieving operational readiness,” according to a Bundeswehr Association press release.

The increase in the defence budget does not go far enough for them. The expansion of the army is also necessary. According to Wüstner, at least 5,000 new positions would have to be added to the present complement of temporary and enlisted soldiers.



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