

# German army expands its submarine fleet

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The German navy put its new submarine model U35 into service last week. At a cost of €500 million, it is one of the most modern, non-nuclear submarines owned by the German navy. It is the fifth of six submarines of the class 212 A series ordered by the German army.

The submarine, produced by ThyssenKrupp Marine Systems, was launched in Kiel in November 2011. At the time, the navy's web site stated that this signified "a further step in modernisation and operation planning." Four years later, the German army is even blunter about its purpose.

In his speech at the celebrations surrounding the U35's entry into service in Kiel on Monday, rear admiral Hans-Christian Luther, operational leader of the navy commando unit, described the new "protégé" of operation flotilla 1 as a "capacity builder," which further increases the capabilities of the German navy. He then hailed the smallest of the three components of the German army, placing the navy's rearmament directly in the context of Germany's remilitarisation.

As a modern component of a combat force with future capabilities, the navy was prepared to respond to the challenges of the 21st century, said Luther. "Precisely the developments over the past year have shown us all once again that a variety of versatile operational methods for the armed forces are required. Submarines are perfect for fulfilling this need."

Germany was in the lead in constructing conventional submarines, stated Luther. The submarines of class 212 A had "the most advanced capabilities in the world among conventional submarines. In joint exercises and operations, our partners and allies are always compelled to show their recognition and respect for the capabilities of these units."

In recent years, the German navy has repeatedly boasted that their new class 212 A submarines had set new diving records and broken through the defence

systems of US warships undetected on several occasions during joint exercises. In an article in *Die Welt* headlined "The German submarine fleet's records" it is stated, "In the First World War they produced a disaster. In the Second World War they had the highest losses, today they are teaching US carriers to be fearful: Germany's submarines are ambivalent weapons."

The German ruling elite intends to use these weapons to defend their economic and strategic interests around the globe. Parliamentary state secretary Markus Grübel, who delivered greetings from defence minister Ursula Von der Leyen (Christian Democratic Union, CDU), commented, according to an official navy report: "how important it was in these times that modern weaponry and systems are introduced to the troops."

According to an NDR report, the U35 is more capable than its four predecessors and is planned for worldwide operations. It was "equipped for the tropics," had greater fuel storage for long journeys and can provide military divers and special forces with more equipment. A new type of radio system makes it possible for the submarine to communicate under water anywhere in the world.

In the future, it could also be equipped with a missile system that would make it possible to destroy targets in the air and on nearby coasts. In addition, torpedoes that are difficult to locate are intended as weapons. U35's sister ship, U36, is set to be declared ready for service by inspectors in the coming months. This would complete the submarine fleet, a secretive and strategically important weapon for the German army.

However, it is to be expected that the navy will be further expanded in connection with the general plan to build up the German army. In recent weeks, the German cabinet agreed to increase the defence budget by at least €8 billion over the coming four years. According to an official strategy paper, more spending

is required for “expanded NATO engagement” and “additional spending around the world.” The navy plays a role in both areas, and their leading military figures are already dreaming of their new significance and past grandeur.

In Kiel, the historic centre of the German navy, a conference took place in the city hall titled “Kiel and the navy 1865-2015: 150 years of united history.” In his main speech, Vice Admiral Rainer Brinkmann, the deputy inspector of the navy, spoke about “the growing demands on the navy around the world and, bound up with this, Germany’s dependence on the navy,” according to the German army’s web site. “The once great but now small navy remains at the centre of political events and is also used as a tool in these events,” the admiral declared.

A look at the navy’s official web site reveals that, as in the previous century, the navy is very conscious of its role as the defender of the economic and strategic interests of German imperialism. The web site states bluntly: “The sea is one of Germany’s most important economic fundamentals. For all of the world’s trading nations, the sea is the most important transport route for the exchange of goods. Over 90 percent of total world trade, close to 95 percent of European Union exports and almost 70 percent of Germany’s imports and exports use sea routes. Germany is a highly industrialised export nation, but it lacks raw materials. To be able to act economically and politically, the Federal Republic is especially dependent upon securing the supply of necessary imports.”

The navy’s current strategy paper titled “Imagining the Navy’s goals 2025+,” authored by former navy inspector Wolfgang Nolting, states that the navy is preparing to militarily defend “free and unhindered world trade as the basis for the welfare of Germany and Europe.”

Because Germany “could [have to] confront threats and risks where they emerge,” the navy had to be “capable of long-term and far-off operations, within multinational frameworks and threatened by enemy coastlines.” They had to “therefore focus more on joint combat forces operations and expand their capabilities to support land-based forces from the sea. The further development of the navy into an expeditionary navy is at the forefront of this.”

“Expeditionary navy” is a synonym for a war navy

capable of acting globally. The rearming of the submarine fleet, like the deployment of the navy to the Horn of Africa and off the Lebanese coast, and the participation of the navy in NATO exercises aimed at Russia in the Black Sea, is aimed precisely at establishing such a force.



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