# German army receives €8 billion for new missile system and warship

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**12 June 2015**

The German army (Bundeswehr) is to be equipped with the MEADS tactical air defense system and the multi-role combat ship 180 by the year 2025. This was announced by Defence Minister Ursula von der Leyen (Christian Democratic Union, CDU) and the Inspector General of the Bundeswehr, General Volker Wieker, on Tuesday at a joint press conference. Each of the two giant arms projects will cost at least €4 billion.

The multibillion-euro investment in a new missile system and warship is part of a massive upgrade of the Bundeswehr. After the announcement by the federal government in March that it intended to increase the military budget over the next four years by around €8 billion, there has been one new order after another.

In early March, the German parliament (Bundestag) agreed a €8.7 billion helicopter deal with Airbus. A few weeks later, the German Navy launched a new submarine worth almost €500 million. At the end of May the defense minister announced that, along with France and Italy, Germany would develop its own combat drone. In addition, von der Leyen announced plans to be finalised this year for the development of a new tank.

This massive rearmament is aimed at providing the German ruling elite with a powerful army that will allow it to use force to advance its global geo-strategic and economic interests.

The web site of the federal defence ministry states that MEADS "is intended both for national defense and for the protection of troops worldwide." At his joint appearance with von der Leyen, Wieker expounded on the "benefits" of the new system. With its 360-degree radius, MEADS could detect and combat targets, offering better protection against enemy fighter aircraft or missiles than the rival US "Patriot" missile system.

Von der Leyen then explained that cities, task forces or airports could be screened as if under a "bell jar" and boasted: "No other nation has such a system."

On his blog "Eyes front", the pro-government military journalist Thomas Wiegold writes that the decision for MEADS was "also a decision for German—or long-term European—sovereignty". The decisive motive for the acquisition, he wrote, was "obviously German national sovereignty over the technology of the system." The development of the air defense system is controlled by German and Italian subsidiaries of the European arms company MBDA, along with the US defense contractor Lockheed Martin.

According to the defense ministry, the 180 multi-role combat ship signals "a paradigm shift for the navy." It excels through "its universal applicability against threats from the air, at sea or underwater". Moreover, "the new ship has enough space for multiple crews, enabling a significant extension of operations and increasing their sustainability." The ship can also support Special Forces operating onshore.

At the same time, a recent interview with Army Chief of Staff Lieutenant-General Bruno Kasdorf makes clear that the recent upgrade of the German military, 70 years after the end of World War II is only just beginning. Kasdorf designated the German army as "world class" and demanded additional billions of euros.

In 2012, he had already identified an investment requirement of approximately €2.5 billion annually for the army alone and had defended this course in public. He called new increased spending approved for 2016 a "good start," but added that it was "insufficient to solve the new challenges."

The procurement of required weapons systems must "take place in the medium term, because in the event of a crisis the industry would not be able to provide ad hoc the necessary capacity". In addition, the modernization

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of “existing weapon systems” and “the manufacture and storage of ammunition” was a “costly ongoing task”.

Kasdorf makes clear that the upgrade he is calling for is aimed primarily at preparing the German army for possible war against Russia. The NATO Rapid Reaction Force (VJTV), currently under German command, had shown “the challenges involved in setting up a command post equipped with the latest equipment.”

“Within a few days,” he wrote, the VJTV, which is currently carrying out military manoeuvres in Poland, could be “involved in operations on the external borders of NATO”. Therefore, “all soldiers must have access to their equipment, artillery and ammunition so we can call up these units ad hoc”.

The working class cannot afford to ignore the latest moves towards rearmament and the revival of war posturing by German generals. Workers are to be made to pay for the revival of German militarism in two ways: as cannon fodder in the wars that Berlin will fight, and with further cuts in social spending to free up the billions demanded by rearmament and military upgrades.

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