

German parliamentary committee demands increase in military budget

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The German government's expansion of the defence budget by €8 billion in March was merely the beginning of a massive hike in military expenditure. This is what emerges from an interview with the chairman of the German parliament's defence committee, Wolfgang Hellmich (Social Democratic Party, SPD), published by *Die Welt* on Tuesday.

In the interview, Hellmich complains that the hike in spending already adopted is not at all sufficient to meet the army's requirements. "For defence investment spending—money for the purchase of materials—only €300 million [\$US 342 million]" remained "from the agreed increase," according to Hellmich. The overwhelming majority was being used up by growing personnel costs, and "more money [will] be required without question."

This was all "an enormous political challenge," he said, before adding "but we have to get it done somehow." The global situation was "unfortunately as it is," and territorial defence had "once again become significant." Even if the shortage of armaments could not be "overcome overnight," Hellmich's "political promise" to the soldiers was: "We are returning to full equipping, every unit should get the materials they require."

The Social Democrat left no doubt about what "the materials" were required for: the preparation of war against Russia and the global expansion of military interventions by the German army, which this year alone has spent several billion euros to purchase warships, submarines, helicopters, drones, tanks and a new missile system.

Hellmich boasted about the German army having sent four fighter jets to patrol the airspace over the Baltic Sea, and how it stands by its obligations to the NATO alliance members. Then he attacked the US-led military

alliance from the right, saying "the reduction of jets by NATO" was, in his opinion, "the wrong signal at present." It ultimately had "to be recognised that now as before, Russia's exercise activities are at a high level."

NATO itself acknowledged that, to date, "there is absolutely no sign of relaxation," he continued. Last year, allied fighter jets were scrambled 442 times, due to the activity of Russian jets, and this year it was already more than 240 times. And this was only the registered flights. There was no reason "to neglect our defence preparedness."

In addition, Germany had announced it would "engage more strongly at the United Nations." Hellmich meant by this the global military interventions involving the German army. As an "example" he cited an expansion of the German army's engagement in resource-rich Mali.

Another "deployment zone" for the German army was clearly the domestic front, according to Hellmich. Asked by *Die Welt* about the ongoing refugee crisis, he said, "Within the framework of the legal possibilities, we must mobilise everything, whatever is possible, including the army. We are dealing with an emergency situation—not officially declared, but de facto."

Hellmich's interview provides an insight into the plans being secretly discussed by the ruling elite in Berlin. Representatives of all parliamentary parties sit on the defence committee, working with high-ranking military and intelligence officials on the military policies and strategies of German imperialism.

The parliament's official website states of the committee, "Its consultations are often highly sensitive, therefore the defence committee meets behind closed doors. The security of the country, our allies and not least the army's soldiers in the field are ultimately at

stake.” The committee plays “an important role in the adoption of the defence budget and the purchasing of arms and materials for the army.”

The war policies are being developed in close collaboration with the Left Party and trade unions. For the Left Party, Kartin Kunert, Alexander Neu and Christine Buchholz sit on the committee. The latter, who is a member of Marx21, allied to Britain’s Socialist Workers Party, visited German troops in the field with defence minister Ursula Von der Leyen (Christian Democratic Union, CDU) and gives speeches on strategy at foreign policy think tanks. Hellmich himself is a member of the Industrial, Mining, Chemical and Energy trade union (IGBCE) and IG Metall, which as part of the German Confederation of Trade Unions (DGB), work closely with the army.



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