

German army announces major expansion as tanks roll into Eastern Europe

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In a comment in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* one week ago the German Defense Minister Ursula von der Leyen (CDU) announced a massive increase in the country's military budget and new international operations to be carried out by the Bundeswehr (German Army). She subsequently announced that the size of the Bundeswehr will increase to almost 200,000 soldiers in the next few years. At present, the total number of active soldiers is around 178,000.

An official press release from the Ministry of Defense stated Tuesday that “a demand has been established for a further 5,000 military posts, 1,000 civilian posts and 500 additional reservists over the next seven years.” The “target for the Bundeswehr up to 2024” would “be increased to a total of 198,000 soldiers with about 61,400 posts for civilian employees.”

In May last year Von der Leyen announced a so-called “Trend Change of Personnel” involving a gradual increase in staffing. At the beginning of December this was followed by the new “Personnel Strategy of the Bundeswehr.” Following the election of US President Donald Trump, the German government's demands for rearmament and war have become increasingly aggressive.

The latest press release states: “The Bundeswehr must be able to respond appropriately to foreign and security policy influences at all times.” The aim of the “Trend Change of Personnel” is to “increase the capacity of the Bundeswehr, strengthen its robustness and build up important future capabilities.”

Overall “99 individual measures are planned to increase the efficiency of the Bundeswehr.” These included, among others, “specialists in the new organizational area, cyber and information space, crews for the Korvetten K 130, strengthening the support forces of armed force bases (logistics/ABC defense)”

and “setting up a 6th tank battalion.”

There is no doubt that the Bundeswehr is preparing for war. Why else the massive investment in personnel and equipment? “The Bundeswehr is required like never before”, Ursula von der Leyen stated in a press release. “The fight against IS terrorism, the stabilization of Mali, continued support for Afghanistan, human smuggling in the Mediterranean and the Aegean, or our considerable presence for NATO in the Baltic States.”

Significantly, on the same day, the Defense Ministry announced the transfer of heavy equipment and other combat groups to the Russian border. “20 Martens and six Leopard battle tanks as well as three mountain tanks are on the way to Lithuania,” according to a report on the official web site of the Bundeswehr. In all, approximately 120 containers and 200 vehicles have been loaded since mid-January and transported to Lithuania by a total of nine trains. By the end of the week the rest of the 450 soldiers are due to leave on their way to lead a NATO battlegroup of a total of 1,000 men.

The transfer of NATO troops to Eastern Europe—further battle groups are being set up in Estonia (under the leadership of Great Britain), Latvia (Canada) and Poland (US)—is part of the campaign to escalate NATO's conflict with Russia, decided in July 2016 at the NATO summit in Warsaw. This includes the establishment of a NATO missile defense system in Romania and Poland, the creation of a 5,000-strong Rapid Reaction Force and an increase in the NATO Response Force from 13,000 to at least 40,000 soldiers.

Media outlets such as German weekly *Der Spiegel* justify “the largest deployment of troops to the east since the end of the Cold War” and the posting of the first German battalion to Eastern Europe since the

destruction wrought by the Wehrmacht (the German army under Nazism) in the Soviet Union in the Second World War as “a reaction to the take over of Ukrainian Crimea by Russia.”

This turns the facts upside down. The real aggressor is NATO, not Moscow. Prior to the integration of Crimea into Russia in March 2014, Washington and Berlin had organized a putsch against the pro-Russian Yanukovich government in close collaboration with extreme right-wing forces. Since then, NATO has been exacerbating the situation and using the predominantly defensive response of Moscow as a pretense to systematically upgrade its forces and step up military pressure against Russia.

A recent comment in the *Tagesspiegel* titled “Nuclear weapons against Russia: Germany needs nuclear weapons” made clear how far sections of the German elites are prepared to go. Maximilian Terhalle, a political scientist at the University of Hagen and former security policy advisor in the Defence Ministry, said: “A Germany... that wants to limit the power of Putin’s Russia in order to maintain an independent Europe, which maintains our domestic and foreign-policy room for action, must do so militarily and therefore also with nuclear weapons.”

Terhalle justifies his nuclear great power fantasies by pointing to Trump’s “pro-Russian course” and what he said were the defective arsenals of the “two security council members” France and Great Britain. These were “too small, too tactile, and partly obsolete” and could not “provide a comprehensive deterrent.” Moreover, in the event of an emergency, one can not simply rely on the fact that the stronger partner (for example the UK) guarantees nuclear (protection) for [Germany] and nuclear offence against Russia.” In “a worst-case scenario,” Germany “must be able to stand up for itself.” This is what “it owes to its people.”

One wonders about the sanity of people like Terhalle. As an alleged “security adviser,” he should be well aware that a “worst-case scenario”—that is, a nuclear war with Russia—has the potential not only to wipe out the German population, but eradicate the entire human race. Workers and youth must take such comments seriously. Seventy-five years after the end of the Second World War, the German ruling class is again preparing to commit terrible crimes in order to impose its geostrategic and economic interests throughout the

world.



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