

Germany and France to jointly develop new fighter jet

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Germany and France agreed to wide-ranging military cooperation at the Franco-German council of ministers last Thursday in Paris. The scale of the proposed arms projects should be taken as a warning by workers and young people throughout Europe. According to the plans being developed by the governments in Berlin and Paris, hundreds of billions will flow into the development of new military equipment.

The official “conclusions” of the German-French defence and security council contain, among other things:

- * The construction of a joint successor to the current tank and artillery systems.

- * The development of joint “naval reconnaissance systems.”

- * The rapid purchasing of European armed drones (“eurodrones”).

- * The construction of new fighter jets, helicopters and missiles.

Germany and France reached an agreement “to jointly develop a future fighter jet so as to replace their current fighter jet fleets in the long term,” the paper stated. In addition, both countries agreed upon “a framework for cooperation in the next generation of the Tiger helicopter and to create a joint programme for tactical air-to-ground missiles.”

The major rearmament plans are part of the German-French strategy of transforming the European Union into a great military power capable of waging war around the world. “Germany and France recognise the demand for a genuine European foreign and security policy, as well as the EU becoming a real global actor in the areas of defence and security,” the paper declares in its first sentence.

It continues, “The joint security and defence policy is part of the joint foreign and security policy; it guarantees the EU’s ability to act with civilian and military methods. The strengthening of the security and defence policy will

require efforts from member states in terms of their capabilities—both in civilian and military spheres.”

Concretely, Berlin and Paris announced in the section entitled “Improvement of operational cooperation” an expansion of military interventions in Africa, above all in the G-5 Sahel states of Mauritania, Burkina Faso, Niger, Mali and Chad. In Eastern Europe, “France, as the framework nation 2018, together with Germany, [will] station troops in Lithuania as part of the German-led NATO battalion.” And by the year 2021, “a binational unit of transport aircraft of the model C-130J” will be created.

The German ruling class in particular is celebrating the German-French military plans as a milestone in the development of an independent European foreign and defence policy. The German Foundation for Foreign Affairs (DGAP) described the development of a joint European fighter jet as “a revolution for Europe’s arms industry.” It clearly asserts “the German-French claim to leadership in the EU and the readiness to cooperate ever more closely in the area of defence.”

The significance of the decision goes “far beyond the question of which weapons systems France and Germany will use over the next 40 to 50 years.” With the project, Germany and France would give the European Union the opportunity “to retain an independent arms industry and not become dependent on US firms.” The paper adds, “European autonomy” was coming “a little bit closer as a result.”

Following Brexit, the election of Donald Trump in the US, and the election of the pro-European President Emmanuel Macron in France, the German ruling elite in particular intends to rapidly press ahead with the decoupling of its foreign policy from Washington and the gradual construction of a European army led by the German army.

The so-called “Germany plan” presented in Berlin on

Sunday by Social Democrat chancellor candidate Martin Schulz includes an explicit election goal of finding “the road to a European army.” The remilitarization of Europe is to be measured against the military capacities of the United States. “The efficiency of military spending in Europe is only 15 percent of that in the United States,” the SPD complained, and demanded, “Through the integration of European capabilities for security and defence, we must reach a stage where we spend our money much more efficiently. This includes the consolidation of the arms industry into a European defence union.”

Schulz’s criticism of NATO’s target of spending 2 percent of GDP on defence has therefore absolutely nothing to do with disarmament, let alone pacifism. “The army requires more money in order to fulfill its tasks,” the “Germany plan” explicitly states. The SPD intends, however, to ensure that this military build-up serves German imperialist interests and not those of the United States. It is therefore necessary to clarify within Europe and NATO, “what defence spending is being used for and for what purpose.”

The German-French military offensive will not only sharpen tensions between Germany and the United States, but between Germany and France themselves. Significantly, Macron invited US President Donald Trump to Paris on the same day as the German-French meeting to celebrate the one hundredth anniversary of America’s entry into World War I on the side of France against Germany.

Sections of the German media responded with concern. Macron was “ready to displace Germany as the United States’ chief ally in the EU,” the news magazine *Focus* warned in a comment. For the French president, “relations with the US [are] at least as significant as relations with the other important EU states. Perhaps even more so. Because there are few who would really bet on the EU becoming a global power.”



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