

German military leadership calls for massive rearmament program

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While the political parties are haggling over the composition of the next federal government, leading military officials are working on a comprehensive armaments program reminiscent of the massive rearming of Hitler's Wehrmacht in the 1930s. A panel discussion involving high-ranking military brass provided frightening testimony at the Berlin Security Conference on November 28 and 29.

With the chairman of the Parliamentary Defence Committee, Wolfgang Hellmich (Social Democratic Party–SPD) moderating the discussion, the leaders of the different branches of the armed forces spoke as if the crimes of German militarism had never taken place. One after another, they presented their demands to the future government and justified them by citing the foreign policy turn initiated at the beginning of 2014.

In his final plea, Inspector of the Luftwaffe (Air Force) Karl Müllner said: “We have stated that as the Federal Republic of Germany, we want to take on more responsibility in the world, and I think it is important that we all realize that this is not to be had for free.” In order to take on this “leadership function,” he said, it was necessary to “sharpen the required instruments.” He hoped that “politicians would recognize this and provide the appropriate means.”

What the Luftwaffe is expecting in the next few years had already been outlined by Müllner in earlier remarks. A major goal was “mobility,” i.e., the credible and rapid relocation of forces to operational areas and the development of “new capabilities” in “ground-based air defence.” But it was also time “to deal with how we want to shape air attack capabilities in the future in the Luftwaffe,” looking “especially at the capabilities of the new generation of fighter aircraft” that make it possible to “identify and engage the target over long distances.”

Most aggressive was Inspector of the Army Lieutenant General Jörg Vollmer. The “paradigm shift” back to national and alliance defence meant that now, as during the Cold War, he had to “relocate troops over long distances and conduct them into battle.” For the German Army, these commitments meant providing three operational divisions while also deploying troops to Eastern Europe as well as providing for the contingents in Afghanistan, Mali, Iraq and Kosovo.

That was “a challenge for the force” that he had to “articulate clearly.” The Army was pursuing the plan of “having the first division replenished by 2027 and kept ready for use.” Also, “the introduction into digitization” was “long overdue.” To that end, he said that “we will set up a testing and trial organization that will allow us to test just what industry can deliver.” In 2032, the “digitized Army 4.0” would have to be standing ready.

At the end of his speech, the general spoke directly to Hellmich: “If I have a wish, it is that what has been initiated will be sustained and the whole thing will go forward step by step.” No one expected that “everything will be in place tomorrow... but it must go a bit faster. It just has to go faster.”

Navy Inspector Andreas Krause presented a billion-euro shopping list of new purchases, including four new Class 125 frigates, five corvettes and six multi-purpose combat ships. The latter he described as real “war fighters.” Added to this would be new helicopters and submarines. Krause also made a direct appeal to the political and business representatives on the podium and in the audience. “We must not lose momentum, and therefore I need you, decision-makers in all areas, to work as a close team together.”

Krause made no secret of the global ambitions of German imperialism. “Germany’s spheres of interest in

the maritime domain,” he said, “range equally from the northern flank down to the Mediterranean and extend into the Indo-Pacific region...”

He noted that in 2016, 25 percent of all imported goods arrived at German ports. In terms of exports, as much as 60 percent of all goods were carried by sea. Altogether, 90 percent of long-distance trade took place over the high seas. Germany thus had “vital interests in safe and secure sea lanes” and required operational capabilities “ranging from light tasks to high-intensity three-dimensional warfare.”

The observations of the inspector of the Joint Support Service, Martin Schelleis, made clear that the Bundeswehr is also preparing for war on the home front. He spoke of “coordinating the tasks of the Bundeswehr in Germany, possibly to lead missions and to ensure the functioning of the German hub.”

In most cases, “Germany, due to its geographically central location and landing ports” would be the “transit zone for reinforcing allied forces and rear operational areas.” The Joint Support Service “with its inspector as national and territorial commander... would be particularly challenged here,” he continued, “not only in performing the Bundeswehr’s own tasks, but in supporting the civilian authorities, police, district administrations and civil protection authorities.”

The disastrous effects German war plans will have for the general population as well as the soldiers were indicated by the statements of the inspector of medical services, Michael Tempel. Although Germany has one of the largest and best-equipped military medical services, current developments presented challenges, he said. “If we go on beyond day one or two or three or four or five in major combat, in a major battle, I have to look at what I must do with the wounded... How much can I rely on hospitals in the host nation, how much can I rely on the hospitals back home? How many burn beds do we have in Europe? Less than one hundred, probably. So we have to look at these specific medical problems.”

The German armaments industry is already licking its lips. On the podium, the head of the armaments company MBDA, Thomas Gottschild, assured the gathering: “We can produce everything, but not always very quickly.” The current situation, he added, required “innovative and smart national cooperation approaches.”

One was “in a situation where a simple ramping-up is not possible, but where we have to make certain preparations in order to bring production capacity back up to speed.” Here, it was important to mention cooperation “between industry and the armed forces,” but “European armaments cooperation” was also vital. The “really big armaments programs” could not be undertaken by any single nation today.

The discussions at the Berlin Security Conference underscore the urgency of the demand of the Socialist Equality Party (Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei–SGP) for new elections. The installation of an extreme right-wing government behind the backs of the population must not be permitted. Such a government would arm Germany to the teeth and prepare a new grab for world power, as happened twice in the last century, with catastrophic consequences. The SGP is fighting for a socialist alternative to capitalism, militarism and war.



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