

German government agrees to arms deliveries to Saudi Arabia, fuelling war in Yemen

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The German Federal Security Council (BSR) recently agreed to allow extensive arms shipments to Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states. This is confirmed in a letter from Economics Minister Peter Altmaier (Christian Democratic Union, CDU) to the parliamentary Economic Affairs Committee.

The BSR is a subcommittee of the federal cabinet, which includes Chancellor Angela Merkel and eight other ministers. Its meetings are secret so that usually nothing penetrates into the public domain. The decision taken at its recent session means that Germany is directly fuelling the brutal war in Yemen, led by a coalition under Saudi Arabia.

According to media reports, the BSR agreed to deliver to Saudi Arabia four reconnaissance radar systems for artillery pieces. These tracking systems are vehicle-mounted and designed to determine the exact source of enemy fire. As a result, they enable precise counter strikes, as *Deutsche Welle* explained in a report.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE), one of the key states in the war against Yemen, will also be able to receive German weapons in future. Specifically, the BSR has given the green light to deliver 48 warheads and 91 guided missiles for ship-based anti-aircraft systems.

Other recipients of German-made weapons include similar reactionary regimes such as Jordan and Qatar. Qatar is looking forward to the provision of 170 German warheads and engines for “Meteor” air-to-air missiles. With the government’s permission, the Rhineland Dynamite Nobel company will now deliver 385 portable anti-tank weapons to Jordan.

The BSR also approved a shipment to the military regime of General Abdel Fatah al-Sisi in Egypt. Seven air defence systems from Diehl Defence can now be delivered. They are reportedly equipped with the “IRIS-

T SLM” missile, one of the most modern short-range missiles worldwide, equipped with an infrared sensing system. Fighter jets with these missiles can independently shoot down flying objects to the side (instead of just from behind), which significantly reduces the blind spot for the pilot.

The extensive permits for the delivery of advanced weaponry to the reactionary regimes in the Middle East means the German government is continuing its policy of exporting arms to the Saudi-led coalition, thereby making itself an accomplice in one of the biggest war crimes of recent years.

World Food Program (WFP) Director David Beasley recently said that Yemen faces a “full-scale famine” if the war on the Arabian Peninsula is not halted immediately. Even now, of the 18 million inhabitants of Yemen, two-thirds do not know where their next meal is coming from. This famine is caused by the blockade and battles for the port city of Hodeida, which is the country’s only landing point for relief supplies. At least 10,000 people have already died in the civil war, which has been ongoing since 2014, according to UN figures.

The German defence industry has benefited from this war policy for years. The decision of the BSR makes clear that the Social Democratic Party’s (SPD) insistence that the agreement forming its Grand Coalition with the CDU/CSU precludes sending weapons to states participating in the Yemen war is not worth the paper it was written on. It has merely served to lend a thin humanitarian cover to the massive militarization of German foreign policy.

Already in the last legislature, the Grand Coalition allowed the export of weapons and war equipment worth about €1.3 billion to Saudi Arabia and its allies in the Yemen war.

For the Grand Coalition, providing weapons to fuel the war in Yemen is more than a matter of securing and expanding the profits of German defence companies. More than 70 years after the end of the Second World War, the continuing arms shipments to the Middle East and the Arabian Peninsula are part of the strategic plans of the German ruling class, which wants to pursue its geopolitical goals by military means. Weapons shipments are the first step in initiating and justifying future involvement in military combat operations, including major wars.

Nothing could better illustrate this connection than Defence Minister Ursula von der Leyen's visit to Iraq last weekend. Von der Leyen met there with members of the German military contingent Counter Daesh/Capacity Building Iraq. Since March, the hitherto separate German contingents in Iraq and Jordan have worked together under this name. In Erbil in northern Iraq, von der Leyen then visited a site of the Kurdish Peshmerga and the multinational Camp Stephan. In the north of the country, 100 German soldiers are currently stationed as part of a training mission for the Peshmerga.

In Iraq, too, Germany's military involvement initially began with arms deliveries, before the terrorist attacks in Paris in November 2015 served as a pretext for intervention by the Luftwaffe (Air Force). As the WSWS wrote on the occasion of the new military mandate in March, the merger of the missions in Iraq and Jordan serves to "train the Iraqi army as a proxy army and lackey for imperialist interests."

With the deployment of German soldiers, Berlin is pursuing yet another goal: "The mission also 'contributes to creating the basis for the return of internally displaced persons and refugees,' write the CDU/CSU and SPD in the draft mandate." While the Grand Coalition is massively expanding its area of interest in the Middle East, it is simultaneously preparing to expel thousands of refugees into exactly those countries to which it is still providing more munitions.



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