

German government registers record military budget and gears up for war

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Germany will again set a record level of defence spending this year. According to information from the *Deutsche Presse-Agentur*, the German government has told NATO it will spend €53.03 billion in 2021. Actual military expenditure is thus far higher than the official defence budget of €46.93 billion passed in December.

The massive escalation of military spending in recent years—in 2014, the defence budget amounted to €32.4 billion—is just the beginning. A position paper published on 9 February by the Defence Ministry, titled “Thoughts on the Bundeswehr [Armed Forces] of the Future,” shows what the ruling class is preparing behind the backs of the population: the biggest German arms offensive since Hitler’s build-up of the Wehrmacht in the 1930s.

The paper comes directly from the pens of Defence Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer (Christian Democratic Union, CDU) and the senior-most member of the military brass, Inspector General Eberhard Zorn. In several respects it is reminiscent of the megalomaniac plans of German imperialism in the first half of the 20th century—threatening other powers, above all Russia and China. At its centre is the demand that Germany, given its geographical location and economic strength, must not only lead Europe but also play a central role worldwide, and that it must acquire the appropriate armed forces to do so.

Under the heading, “Time for new thinking,” it says, “Now, in spring 2021, is the ideal moment to deepen the debate on our security and to push forward with decisions. In Germany, a new Bundestag [federal parliament] will be elected in September and in some places discussions on defence issues have already begun... Our focus is therefore on the tasks we must tackle today to safeguard Germany’s security tomorrow; on the role Germany must assume in Europe and beyond—and on the armed forces it needs for both.”

Preparing for war

In the section, “What this means for Germany,” Kramp-Karrenbauer and Zorn bluntly state that the planned rearmament is in preparation for full-scale wars. Germany, they say, has a “special duty towards Europe’s security because of its geographical position in the centre of Europe and its economic strength” and must “make a contribution to security and peace that

is commensurate with its situation and capabilities—including in the military sphere.”

The defence minister and Germany’s top general then write: “Germany bears responsibility for securing its own territory—national defence—as well as for the equally important task of defending the alliance. For both, credible military deterrence, and defence capability in all dimensions—land, air, sea, space and cyber—are fundamental. ... The mission of national and alliance defence requires our soldiers to be ready and able to stand up in combat as well.”

It continues in this tone. To live up to its “dual responsibility,” Germany must “have a broad mix of military capabilities.” A “broad military profile” is “not a luxury, but a strategic necessity. Without a Bundeswehr [Armed Forces] that can be deployed in a variety of ways, there can be no Europe capable of action.”

The section on “Roles” deals specifically with Germany’s role in future conflicts and potentially wars of total annihilation. “Due to its central location,” Berlin, as a “first responder,” “must be on the spot faster than anyone else in the event of crises, especially at the external borders of NATO and the EU.” This applies “to the Baltic as well as to the Balkans, to the Mediterranean as well as to the North and Baltic Seas.”

Further barely concealed threats of war against nuclear-armed Russia follow. As a “‘hub’ in the Alliance,” Germany’s role “in the centre of Europe is crucial for the mobility of allied forces.” The Bundeswehr must, therefore “provide infrastructure and logistics and make its contribution to coordination and protection so that operations can be carried out smoothly throughout the Alliance area.”

In addition, there is “the role as a troop provider in international crisis management also beyond the territory of the Alliance,” i.e., in neo-colonial wars of conquest in Africa, the Middle East and Central Asia. “Especially for this task ... specialised ‘high-value capabilities’ are often needed, such as reconnaissance, air-refuelling and transport, electronic warfare or special forces.”

Militarisation at home

Kramp-Karrenbauer and Zorn name the deployment of the army at home as another task of the Bundeswehr. “Homeland security in

peace as well as in crisis” includes “a strong reserve that is available in the event of a disaster to support the authorities in Germany, as well as an important force multiplier for the other roles mentioned.”

The WSWS has already described the planned “voluntary military service in homeland security” in an earlier article as “an invitation to neo-Nazis and other right-wing extremists” to “receive military training from the state in return for payment.” The reactionary plans that the ruling class is pursuing with this are clear. In the Kaiserreich (Imperial Empire), the Weimar Republic and under the Nazis, military and fascist militias were used to crush social protests and revolutionary uprisings at home.

As on the eve of the First and Second World Wars, the policy of war abroad is accompanied by the extensive militarisation of society at home. Zorn and Kramp-Karrenbauer announce that they will “promote strategic capability and strategic culture in our country.” Among other things, they plan “the further development of the Federal Security Council into a National Security Council,” the creation of a “Federal Security Advisory Council,” the establishment of a “Security Week in the German Bundestag” and “a Federal Armed Forces Planning Act placing the financing of the armed forces on a solid, multi-year foundation, as in other countries, without restricting the financial sovereignty of the Bundestag.”

In several places, the paper calls for a massive increase in defence spending. At the same time, funds from other departments are to be tapped to finance the far-reaching rearmament and war plans. For example, Kramp-Karrenbauer and Zorn “point out with particular emphasis that defence is a task for the entire state which cannot be reflected in the defence budget alone—the federal government is jointly responsible for the financing of “major political projects.” The state’s “core task of security” must be “broadly supported.”

Immediate armament plans

When it comes to the militarisation drive, it cannot move quickly enough for the ruling class. “We now feel that in addition to capabilities and equipment, structures and command organisation must also be rapidly adapted to the situation,” the paper says. “Concerning national and alliance defence,” the “recent support provided by the Bundeswehr in the coronavirus pandemic clearly shows the weaknesses concerning territorial structures and command processes.”

In the very immediate term, it is a matter of “further modernising the capabilities of the armed forces for all roles in our country and across the board, adapting them to technological change, filling the gaps in equipment and facilities, creating leaner, more functional, more resilient structures as well as shorter and thus faster processes in the military command structure, in the procurement and utilisation organisation and in the Ministry of Defence.”

In the coming weeks and months, numerous major projects worth billions are to be launched, and recruitment for the

essentially fascist “homeland security” begun.

By the end of March, “a comprehensive evaluation of the issue of ground-based air defence will be available,” by the end of the first quarter, along with “the procurement proposal for the Eurodrone;” and in the second quarter, “the decision on the procurement of a heavy transport helicopter.” Also, in April, “the outlines for a modern and up-to-date homeland security” will be presented; and in May, “key points for the Bundeswehr of the future,” i.e., “concrete proposals for the further development of the armed forces concerning their capabilities, structures and operational readiness.”

Other “issues not yet ready for decision” would be “prepared in such a way that they can be decided at the beginning of the new legislative period.” Among other things, the Bundeswehr plans to press ahead with numerous major projects, including new tanks, warships, and the FCAS European combat aircraft system, whose implementation alone will consume several hundred billion euros.

The Ministry of Defence and the Bundeswehr leadership can only push ahead so aggressively because they are supported by all the parties in the Bundestag, from the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) to the Left Party. Above all, the supposedly “left” opposition parties have made it clear time and again that they fully support the war course of the Christian Democrats and Social Democrats in the grand coalition. For example, in their new party programme, the Greens plead for massive rearmament of European imperialism under German leadership, and in a recent paper, the Left Party also calls for the building of a European army and for the Bundeswehr to be armed to the teeth.

Only the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) opposes the return of German militarism and fascism and arms the widespread opposition among workers and youth with a socialist programme. Our election appeal declares: “Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, all of the great powers are preparing for new wars in order to pursue their economic interests... Millions are to die so that the German financial elite can pursue its imperialist interests with military force. *We demand: An immediate end to all foreign interventions! Dissolution of NATO and the German armed forces! Billions for education and jobs instead of rearmament and war!*”



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