

German Defence Minister Kramp-Karrenbauer threatens Russia and China in interview

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In an interview with Redaktionsnetzwerk Deutschland (RND), German Defence Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer announced a further increase in military spending and a massive rearmament programme over the coming years. She threatened Russia and China, and underscored German imperialism's aim of enforcing its economic and geostrategic interests around the world by military means, including independently of and in opposition to the United States.

"First of all, it's about our own interests and our own security. It was never about doing the United States a favour. We have to ensure our own security," she noted near the beginning of the interview. "American foreign policy" is "again more dependable" under the new president. However, "key foreign policy areas of focus" remain "under Biden ... such as the Indo-Pacific. It is also clear that the issue of burden sharing within NATO remains on the agenda for the United States, even if they now adopt a new style."

In fact, the Biden administration and the US military are paving the way for a military confrontation with the nuclear powers Russia and China. They have intensified the conducting of provocative "freedom of navigation" exercises in waters claimed by China in the South China Sea and are planning to station offensive missiles along the coastlines of many densely populated islands, including Japan, Taiwan and the Philippines.

Biden has also intensified the war drive against Russia since taking power. In mid-March, he described Russian President Vladimir Putin as a "murderer" and threatened retaliatory measures. Since then, the Ukrainian regime of Volodymyr Zelensky, backed by the US, NATO and European Union, has stepped up its war with pro-Russian separatists in the east of the country.

German imperialism is responding to the threat of a nuclear war with its own major war drive. Amid the pandemic, the ruling class claims there is no money for the necessary protective measures and decent wages for health

care workers. Welfare benefits are being cut, and the exploitation of the working class intensified. At the same time, billions of euros are to be funnelled into military rearmament.

It is "good" that the army will receive "an additional €2.5 billion for the coming year, stated Kramp-Karrenbauer in the interview. This equates to a five percent increase in defence spending next year to reach €49.3 billion. Even though the defence budget is almost as much as the combined budgets for health and education, the ruling elite remains dissatisfied.

These sums are "nowhere near enough to further develop our capabilities to effectively combat the threats," complained the defence minister and vowed to further increase defence spending after the September federal election. The "next coalition talks" would be "decisive." They must "confirm major rearmament projects for the future. Security is a central task for the entire government," she said.

Behind the backs of the population, the grand coalition government is working on Germany's largest rearmament programme since the military buildup of the Wehrmacht prior to World War II. They have "presented a consolidated plan of what is necessary for our security," stated Kramp-Karrenbauer. It "includes the major rearmament projects we have agreed to at the European level and which therefore have priority. These projects—together with the normal defence budget—must be guaranteed under a planning law, because they extend over 10 to 15 years." They will "certainly need to spend more money."

The figures and projects dreamt of by Kramp-Karrenbauer and the Defence Ministry are gigantic. "The sum to meet our calculated requirements by 2025 can be measured in tens of billions," she remarked. "Fifteen armaments projects" have been "named, including their cost." Along with "German-French projects like FCAS (Future Air Combat Systems) and MGCS (Main Ground Combat System)," these include "the replacement of the Tornado fighter jets, the replacement

of out-of-date naval service ships, the purchasing of aircraft for defence against submarines, as well as a tactical air defence system.”

The rearmament is not aimed, as the Defence Minister likes to claim, at ensuring the “security” and “prosperity” of the German population, waging the “war on terror,” or even the enforcement of “women’s rights” and “democracy.” What is involved is the imposition of German imperialism’s interests by military means.

In the interview, Kramp-Karrenbauer defended parliament’s decision in late March to extend the German military intervention in Afghanistan, and prepared readers for a further escalation of combat operations in the Central Asian country. She has “in close consultation with the military leadership, ordered the strengthening of protective measures. Reinforcements, additional armaments, equipment and munitions will be sent there.” She would also have “liked to have armed drones available.”

But the ruling elite’s brutal occupation and plundering of Afghanistan are only the prelude to much wider wars. According to Kramp-Karrenbauer, the army “has learned a great deal from 20 years in Afghanistan.” She desires a “political debate about this whole-of-government intervention.” One is “obliged to do that for those who died or were injured in Afghanistan.” In addition, one must “with regard to the next German intervention, possibly in the Sahel zone, be clearer from the outset on which goals are achievable and which aren’t.”

With the characteristic hubris of the German bourgeoisie, which carried out barbaric crimes during the two world wars with the aim of seizing world power, Kramp-Karrenbauer threatened Russia and China. Russia is “with its arsenal of weaponry, unlike China, a very imminent threat, both with conventional and nuclear weapons.” However, China also has “a very ambitious plan to make its army the largest and most modern in the world.” And it has “evidently the desire to shape the world order in its image so as to force weaker countries in particular to take specific action. We, meaning Europe and the West, cannot afford to be the weaker ones.”

This is unmistakable. Germany and Europe are rearming to impose limits on Beijing and Moscow, up to and including a nuclear war. In this, it is not Russia and China, but the imperialist powers who are the aggressors. NATO has been systematically encircling Russia since the dissolution of the Soviet Union and is now intensifying its hostility towards Beijing. Despite close economic ties between the two countries, Germany is playing an increasingly aggressive role.

After Berlin backed the right-wing coup in Ukraine in 2014 to install a pro-Western regime and weaken Russia, it is turning its attention further to the east. Already last

September, the Social Democrat-led Foreign Ministry published a “doctrine for the Indo-Pacific,” which stated: “The Himalayas and the Straits of Melaka may seem far off. But our prosperity and geopolitical influence for the decades to come are based precisely on how we cooperate with Indo-Pacific states.” As a globally active trading nation, Germany cannot “be satisfied with the role of a spectator,” including on military issues.

This policy is now to be implemented. “The situation in the Indo-Pacific certainly interests us,” stressed Kramp-Karrenbauer. Germany will “send a frigate to the Indo-Pacific” in the coming months.” Ultimately, the “respect of rules for free trade and territorial integrity, the strengthening of our democratic partners in the region, like Australia, Japan, and Singapore, is in the German and European interest.” We are “not only talking about the threat to the freedom of sea lanes by China, but actually doing something about it,” she continued.

The deeper cause of the imperialist powers’ ruthless actions is the deep crisis of the capitalist system, which has been vastly intensified by the coronavirus pandemic. Like the murderous “profit before lives” policy, which has claimed the lives of over 75,000 people in Germany alone, the drive to war is being supported by all parties in parliament, including the nominal left.

In its election programme, the Greens plead for a massive rearmament programme for the German army, NATO and the European Union, and threatened Russia and China. And the Left Party long ago made clear that in a potential Social Democrat/Left Party/Green government, it would fully endorse the aggressive foreign policy course.

In the election campaign, only the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (SGP) is resisting the return of German militarism and the threat of a third world war. It is fighting for an international and socialist programme in order to provide a perspective to the mounting opposition among workers and young people.

The SGP election programme states: “Amid the coronavirus pandemic, all of the major powers are preparing for new wars to enforce their economic interests ... millions are to die to pursue the imperialist interests of the German financial elite via military means. We demand: The immediate ending of all foreign interventions and wars! Dissolution of NATO and the German army! Billions for education and jobs instead of rearmament and war!”



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