

German Defence Minister Kramp-Karrenbauer threatens Russia with nuclear weapons

Johannes Stern
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In the midst of negotiations to form a new governing coalition in Berlin, Germany's federal government is threatening Russia with the use of nuclear weapons. In an interview with Deutschlandfunk last Thursday, incumbent Defence Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer (Christian Democrats, CDU) said, "We have to make it very clear to Russia that in the end—and that is also the deterrent doctrine—we are ready to use such means [nuclear weapons] so that it has a deterrent effect beforehand and nobody gets the idea, for example, to attack NATO partners in the areas over the Baltic states or in the Black Sea. That is the core idea of NATO, this alliance, and it will be adapted to the current behaviour of Russia."

The fact that Kramp-Karrenbauer speaks of the use of nuclear weapons against Russia without blinking an eye gives harrowing insight into the state of mind at the highest levels of the German state. Eighty years after the attack by the Nazi Wehrmacht on the Soviet Union and the war of annihilation in the East, scenarios are being discussed behind the backs of the population that directly endanger hundreds of millions of lives. These discussions take place amid the raging pandemic, which has seen the ruling elite sacrifice thousands of people to protect corporate profits.

The Defence Ministry's official website said the minister had chosen her "clear words on the occasion of the meeting of the nuclear planning group" at the meeting of NATO defence ministers at the end of last week. Kramp-Karrenbauer has made it clear that "Germany is and will remain firmly integrated into the alliance's nuclear planning. Germany stands by its obligations in the alliance."

A report in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (F.A.Z.) on the NATO meeting explains what this means in concrete terms. "That could mean, for example, that German tornadoes equipped with atomic bombs are relocated to the eastern flank when a certain conflict threshold is reached. This is not discussed in public, but it is part of the strategic considerations when the so-called nuclear planning group, to

which all member states except France belong, provides advice," the newspaper noted.

In other words: German warplanes armed with US atomic bombs stored in Germany would be relocated to the Russian border in the event of a conflict and they would possibly also drop them—with unforeseeable consequences. A nuclear war between NATO and Russia would not only turn the whole of Europe into a nuclear desert; it would call into question the survival of all humanity.

The F.A.Z. article, headlined "Defence Planning of NATO: The Art of Flexible Deterrence," shows in detail how aggressively NATO is advancing war preparations against Russia and the central role Germany plays in this.

The new concept "Defence and deterrence in the Euro-Atlantic area" (DDA), which was adopted in June, is currently being implemented. The first step in this direction is the "Saceur's AOR Strategic Plan," which restructures the area of responsibility (AOR) of the Commander-in-Chief for Europe (Saceur)," the F.A.Z. explained. The alliance is going "back to an organizational structure that already existed during the Cold War." Each corps gets "a precisely allocated area of operations." On the other hand, "it is about other threats and the ability to react flexibly to them," according to the F.A.Z.

The plans read like a modern form of total war. An operation plan stipulates to act "early and effectively." To this end, the alliance wants to "include all of its headquarters in the defence" in the future, which of course also applies to the rapid mobilization and relocation of combat units. Ultimately, "it is about regaining the dominance of escalation." The "trickiest part" of it is "the nuclear strategy."

The incoming federal government will have the task of implementing these war plans. "The planning cycle" is, "as usual, designed for four years, which is important for the new federal government," writes the F.A.Z. This would "define the future priorities and investments, including

defence spending.” It is about providing the necessary “military capabilities that make it possible to actually deploy troops: reconnaissance, strategic air transport, digital operations management, missile defence.”

The plans for the implementation of these massive war and armament projects have already been finalised. In May, the Ministry of Defence adopted the “cornerstones for the future of the Bundeswehr (German army),” which are intended to effectively prepare the German military for the conduct of major military conflicts, including nuclear war.

The Bundeswehr must “be able to conduct military operations against an equal opponent in combined arms combat, and in the future also in combined dimensions—across the spectrum up to and including high-intensity combat,” it says. For this, “military capabilities for deterrence across the board, including nuclear participation, are necessary.”

In addition, the German armed forces would have to “be able to provide the political leadership with flexible military options and to provide forces and capabilities that are able to act in all dimensions, adapted to the situation.” They would have to “act quickly and seamlessly across dimensions and be able to function in the entire spectrum of dimensions at the same time.” The “guiding principle” must be: “Organize yourself as you fight.”

There is no doubt that the current coalition negotiations between the Social Democrats (SPD), Free Democrats (FDP) and the Greens are discussing the implementation of this aggressive foreign and defence policy agenda. As with the formation of the government four years ago, the talks are taking place in strict secrecy. The ruling class knows that its agenda is deeply hated by the population and faces tremendous opposition.

SPD parliamentary group leader Rolf Mützenich reacted nervously to Kramp-Karrenbauer’s open threats against Russia. He told the DPA that she should not burden the work of a future federal government. Her “recent mind games ... on the use of nuclear weapons in a conflict with Russia” are “irresponsible.” She “unfortunately does not differ from the equally unfounded threats from the Russian side.”

Mützenich’s statements are false in two respects. On the one hand, he knows very well that it is not Russia, but NATO, that is the aggressor. Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union 30 years ago, the military alliance has been systematically advancing towards the Russian border. The SPD plays a central role in this. The incumbent Social Democratic Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier, as foreign minister supported the right-wing coup in Ukraine in 2014 in order to install an anti-Russian regime in Kiev and weaken Moscow. The subsequent dispatch of German combat troops to Eastern Europe also took place with the

explicit support of the SPD, which has headed the Foreign Ministry without interruption for eight years.

On Monday, government spokesman Steffen Seibert defended Kramp-Karrenbauer’s nuclear threats as a logical implementation of the policy of the grand coalition. As long as nuclear weapons are understood by some states as a means of military conflict, “there is a need to maintain a nuclear deterrent within the framework of NATO,” he said cynically. That is “also the case in the coalition agreement.”

Significantly, the annual nuclear weapons exercise “Steadfast Noon” took place in Italy last week. Belgian, Dutch, Italian and German combat bombers were involved in practicing nuclear participation; that is, to train them to use atomic bombs.

The Putin regime has nothing to offer when it comes to opposing the Western preparations for war. It represents the interests of a corrupt oligarchy that has enriched itself through the restoration of capitalism and fears the growing social and political opposition of the working class as much as the imperialist powers. Moscow is responding to threats from Washington, Brussels and Berlin with a mixture of diplomatic and military manoeuvres that further increase the risk of war.

According to the Russian Defence Ministry, the defence attaché of the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in Russia was summoned on October 25. The spokeswoman for the Russian Foreign Ministry, Maria Zakharova, said in an official statement that it is hoped that “there are level-headed people in the German leadership who can prevent their defence minister from recklessly wanting to test our armed forces.”

In fact, the current development as well as historical experience show that there is no “level-headed” faction in the German leadership. Their turn to militarism, fascism and war has objective reasons which, as in the first half of the 20th century, are rooted in the deep crisis of the capitalist system. There is only one way to stop this dangerous development: building an international anti-war movement based on the working class and fighting for the overthrow of capitalism and for a socialist perspective.



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