

German air force procures US nuclear bombers

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A few days after the German government announced a tripling of military spending, the biggest rearmament drive since Hitler is being put into action. The first purchase being made with the Bundeswehr's 100 billion euro special fund is 35 US F-35 Lightning II stealth bombers, which can be used for nuclear strikes, among other things.

Lockheed Martin's supersonic jets are currently considered the most modern fighter aircraft in the world and are used by seven European countries in addition to the US. Equipped with nuclear weapons, they can hide from enemy radar and, depending on the design, are capable of vertical take-off and landing. Their operational range of 1,090 kilometres corresponds to the distance between Passau in eastern Bavaria and Lviv in western Ukraine. The acquisition costs alone are estimated at well over 4 billion euros.

On Monday, Defence Minister Christine Lambrecht (Social Democratic Party, SPD) confirmed that the procurement of the F-35 fighter jets was to enable the German government to fight a nuclear war. Specifically for the task of nuclear sharing, the decision had been made in favour of the American carriers, which offered "a unique potential for cooperation" at the European and NATO level. Luftwaffe (Air Force) Inspector Ingo Gerhartz added that in the face of "Putin's aggression," a "credible deterrence" and "unity in NATO" were the "only answer."

Under the NATO concept of so-called "nuclear sharing," partner countries of the US—Germany, Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands and Turkey—can deploy US nuclear weapons stationed in Europe. "The possible armaments include free-falling nuclear weapons in addition to a variety of guided and unguided missiles as well as cruise missiles and bombs," says an article on the official website of the Defence Ministry.

At the US airbase in Büchel alone, 20 B61 thermonuclear gravity bombs are currently being fitted with precision-guidance systems. Although each of these hydrogen bombs has an explosive power several times those dropped on Hiroshima, they are considered "small" and "versatile"

tactical weapons with high military operational value. According to Gerhartz, all 35 new F-35s "will go to Tactical Air Wing 33 in Büchel, where we also perform the role of 'nuclear sharing'."

With the acquisition of F-35 fighter aircraft, the German ruling class is massively accelerating its war plans. It represents a departure from earlier proposals to procure either American F/A-18 bombers or new Eurofighters to ensure nuclear sharing, as both these models would first have to be converted and certified for nuclear weapons use. This potentially years-long process has now been eliminated.

Apparently, the selection was also about securing key German-European technologies against possible US interference. Newsweekly *Der Spiegel*, for example, writes that the potential conversion of the Eurofighters to nuclear bomb capability "would have required the cooperation of the American side ... among other things, for the systems that would have been necessary for docking and releasing the nuclear weapons." This would also have meant "disclosing large parts of the Eurofighter technology to the Americans."

Against this background, even the head of Airbus Defence and Space, Michael Schöllhorn, eventually conceded that "the F-35 represents the simpler and faster way for the Bundeswehr to fulfil its tasks for nuclear sharing," *Der Spiegel* reports.

Schöllhorn and Airbus are also rejoicing because the upgrading of the Luftwaffe is not being limited to the procurement of the American F-35 fighter jets. By 2030, all 93 of its Tornados are to be replaced, including those covering the so-called Electronic Combat Role (ECR) and the conventional fighter-bomber role. And here, the decision was made for the "further development of the Eurofighter," Lambrecht announced.

Immediately, 15 Eurofighter ECRs will be procured. A tweet from the Defence Ministry says: "The Eurofighter will also be retained for the armed forces and will be further developed for the electronic warfare role." Thus, "important key technology will be retained in Germany & Europe. In addition, we are securing a strong German role in the future

FCAS system.”

The “Future Combat Air System—FCAS” is an air combat system driven by Germany, France and Spain, which is to be operational by 2040. The plan is for an integrated system combining a manned sixth-generation multi-role combat aircraft, unmanned escort aircraft (remote carriers), drones, satellites and command and control aircraft, and possibly also having its own nuclear component.

The costs for the project are gigantic and go far beyond the 100 billion euros estimated in the “Special Assets of the Bundeswehr.” Financial daily *Handelsblatt* reported in 2019 that the system will devour “up to 500 billion euros by the middle of the century.”

In a “daily order on the use of the 100 billion euro special assets of the Bundeswehr,” also published on Monday, Lambrecht and Inspector General Eberhard Zorn left no doubt that the just announced rearmament was only the beginning of preparing the German military for full-scale war.

First, he said, it was necessary to “close gaps in the current stockpiles. Our formations, the companies, battalions, brigades, divisions, ships, boats, batteries, and aircraft units will not only be fully equipped, but also with uniform materiel,” the order says. In addition, “new capabilities will be built, and research and development will be advanced to this end ... for example, in the fields of artificial intelligence or space.”

There was a need for “a Bundeswehr that maintains capabilities across the entire military spectrum—above all, for national and alliance defence, but also for international crisis management.” The goal was “a fully equipped force that can hold its own in combat immediately and everywhere.” Every soldier must be “ready to be deployed at short notice in our core mission of national and alliance defence.”

The Defence Report, which was presented yesterday by Eva Högl (SPD), the commissioner for the armed forces, took the same line. According to the report, 2022 will be “a year in which the Bundeswehr will be challenged more than ever before in its core mission of national and alliance defence.” The “decisive action of the government and the announcement to create a special fund of 100 billion euros for the Bundeswehr as well as to increase the defence budget” were “therefore very welcome.”

The Daily Order justifies the massive rearmament and war plans with “Putin’s war of aggression on Ukraine,” which “calls into question fundamental rules of the European peace order.” Similar formulations can be found in the Defence Report. It is the familiar, mendacious propaganda.

In fact, the now proclaimed “foreign policy turning point” was meticulously prepared behind the backs of the population for a long time. The “special assets of the

Bundeswehr” were also discussed by the SPD, Liberal Democrats (FDP) and Greens during their coalition negotiations last October. This is not about the defence of “peace” or “freedom” but the enforcement of geostrategic and economic interests by military means.

It is a fact that the “first war of aggression in Europe since the end of the Second World War” was not waged by Russia but by the imperialist powers. Thirty years ago, the recognition of Croatia and Slovenia, in violation of international law, at the instigation of Germany and the USA triggered a terrible civil war in the former Yugoslavia. This was followed in 1999 by NATO’s bombing of Serbia, which culminated in the violent secession of Kosovo.

Then came the interventions and regime change operations in Afghanistan (2001), Iraq (2003), Libya (2011) and Syria (since 2014), which were in violation of international law which cost millions of lives and reduced entire countries to rubble.

Putin’s invasion of Ukraine is reactionary, but NATO is also the aggressor in Eastern Europe. It has systematically encircled Russia, and it orchestrated a right-wing coup in Ukraine in 2014 to bring a pro-Western regime to power in Kiev. The same regime change operation is now being pursued by the imperialist powers against Moscow itself, threatening to provoke a third world war.

Like Chancellor Scholz’s earlier war speech in the Bundestag, the Defence Report and the Order of the Day are warnings. Eighty years after the invasion of the Soviet Union by Hitler’s Wehrmacht (Army) and the war of extermination in the East, Germany is again preparing for war against Russia. The Luftwaffe, which is now being massively upgraded and prepared for the use of nuclear weapons, is already playing a key role in this.

“We, as an air force, were the first to have an answer to the crisis in Ukraine,” Gerhartz boasted in a recent Luftwaffe video on the procurement of the F-35 fighter jets. “We were the first as an air force to move our Eurofighters to Romania. We are flying our jets over Poland; we flew with the Tornados over the Baltic Sea to pick up electronic signals.” More tanker aircraft are now being brought to Eastern Europe, and “air defence will also be moved.”



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