

German government to supply heavy tanks to Ukraine

Johannes Stern**26 July 2022**

The German government is playing an increasingly aggressive role in NATO's proxy war against Russia, arming the pro-Western regime in Kiev to the teeth.

On Monday, Ukraine received its first Gepard anti-aircraft tanks from Germany. "Today, the first three Gepards officially arrived," Defence Minister Oleksiy Resnikov announced on Ukrainian television. In addition, he said, tens of thousands of rounds of ammunition had also been handed over. A total of 15 Gepards were expected to arrive, Resnikov added.

This is the second delivery of so-called heavy weaponry from Germany and the first delivery of Western-designed tanks to Ukraine. Like the seven self-propelled howitzer 2000s already handed over to Kiev by Berlin, the Gepard tanks aim to further escalate the war.

The range of the tanks against targets in the air is up to 5,000 metres. The rate of fire of the two tank barrels is 550 rounds per minute each, making a total cadence of 1,100 rounds per minute. The tanks are to be used primarily against the Russian Air Force but can also engage targets on the ground.

The actual number of tanks delivered could end up being even higher than Resnikov indicated. In May, Chancellor Olaf Scholz (Social Democratic Party, SPD) had promised Kiev substantially more Gepards after a closed government meeting in Meseberg Castle. To repel the Russian offensive in the Donbass, he said, the country wanted to "supply up to 50 Gepard tanks suitable for this purpose."

Since then, Germany has literally flooded Ukraine with weapons. The government's official tally of "German lethal and non-lethal military support for Ukraine" is now so long that only a fraction can be reproduced here. Among others, the following have been delivered so far:

- 900 "Panzerfaust 3" bazookas with 3,000 shells
- 14,900 anti-tank mines
- 500 STINGER anti-aircraft missiles
- 2,700 STRELA anti-aircraft missiles
 - 7 self-propelled howitzer 2000s including adaptations, training and spare parts (a joint project with the Netherlands)
 - 21.8 million rounds of small arms ammunition
 - 50 bunker busters
 - 100 MG 3 machine guns with 500 spare barrels and breechblocks

- 100,000 hand grenades
- 5,300 explosive charges
- 100,000 metres of detonating cord and 100,000 explosive charges
- 350,000 detonators
- 280 motor vehicles
- 7,944 RGW 90 Matador anti-tank weapons.

Additional supplies are planned to include:

- 53,000 rounds of anti-aircraft ammunition
- 8 mobile ground radars and thermal imagers
- 3 self-propelled howitzer 2000s
- 4,000 rounds of anti-aircraft training ammunition
- 10 (+10 as option) autonomous surface drones
- 43 reconnaissance drones
- 54 M113 armoured troop carriers with armament (systems from Denmark, conversion financed by Germany)
- 30 Gepard anti-aircraft tanks including approximately 6,000 rounds of anti-aircraft ammunition
- IRIS-T SLM air defence system
- COBRA artillery tracking radar
- 3 MARS multiple rocket launchers with ammunition
- 3 armoured recovery vehicles
- 5,032 handheld anti-tank weapons

And even this is far from enough for the ruling class. Currently, leading government officials are beating the drum for the direct delivery of Leopard 2 and Marder heavy combat and infantry tanks to Ukraine. Up to now, the NATO powers have only delivered Soviet-designed battle tanks to Ukraine via a "backfilling" procedure to the East European countries providing the hardware. However, this model is not considered effective enough and has recently led to tensions between the Eastern European NATO countries and Germany. In particular, Poland has criticized Germany for not replacing Polish tank deliveries to Kiev quickly enough.

The chairwoman of the Bundestag (parliament) Defence Committee, Marie-Agnes Strack-Zimmermann (Free Democratic Party, FDP), said on Monday that Germany had so far not been able to provide replacements for its Eastern European NATO partners' arms deliveries to Ukraine as quickly as expected. "If this is problematic for our partners, we should stop the backfill arrangement and deliver directly to

Ukraine—if necessary also the Leopard 2. Time was pressing,” Strack-Zimmermann told the dpa news agency.

Similar tones can be heard from the SPD. “The aim of the backfill arrangement was primarily to support Ukraine in the short-term with weapons that soldiers there can operate without training, but that has not really worked so far,” noted Michael Roth, chairman of the Bundestag Foreign Affairs Committee. He added that it was now “a new phase of the war.” Deliveries of Western weapons so far had made a “real difference” in recent weeks, he said, adding this must “now be resolutely continued.”

Defence Minister Christine Lambrecht (SPD) said she had “great respect” for Poland because the country had very quickly delivered the promised Soviet-designed T-72 tanks to Kiev. The “gaps” that had arisen would have to be made up quickly under the backfill procedure, she said. However, she was currently “unable to do so from Bundeswehr [armed forces] stocks” if she wanted to “ensure national and alliance defence.” She was therefore “holding talks with industry” and was “certain that we will reach a good result.”

In other words, the German defence industry will now be even quicker to make more German battle tanks and infantry fighting vehicles fit for purpose and build new ones—for NATO’s Eastern European allies, for Ukraine, but above all for Germany’s own armed forces.

The Greens, who have been clamouring incessantly for more direct tank deliveries to Ukraine for several days now, are acting particularly aggressively. “The backfill arrangement is not working as planned,” Katrin Göring-Eckardt, vice president of the Bundestag and long-time parliamentary group leader of the Greens, told the RND press agency. “Alternatives belong on the table. For example, supplying weapons directly, if we can.” She said the Polish government’s criticism was “a wake-up call” and that Germany must organize “sufficient support for Ukraine with weapons.” After all, “arms deliveries help decide the duration of the war, decide human lives.”

The argumentation of the former Green pacifists follows the murderous war logic of German militarism in the last century. The leading representatives of the Imperial Empire and the Nazis’ Third Reich also justified the mobilization of the German war machine in the First and Second World Wars with the cynical argument of wanting to achieve a quick “victorious peace” or “final victory.” In reality, they prolonged the wars and sacrificed millions of lives to the predatory interests of German imperialism.

This is what is at stake today as well. The ruling class knows perfectly well that massive support for Ukraine is not only prolonging the war and the suffering it entails, but even conjures up the danger of a nuclear third world war. Only a few weeks ago, President Joe Biden warned that the delivery of NATO fighter jets to Ukraine could “trigger World War III.” Now, his administration is planning to do just that. Over the weekend, National Security Council Strategic Communications

Coordinator John Kirby confirmed that the Pentagon was preparing to deliver fighter jets to Ukraine.

The German government is participating in the war madness because it wants to be in the forefront when it comes to dividing up the spoils and subjugating the resource-rich and geostrategically central Eurasian landmass. Moreover, it sees the NATO war as an opportunity to finally throw overboard the last post-war shackles and rise once again as the leading European military power after the defeats and unspeakable crimes of two world wars.

“After the German crimes of World War II” it was “difficult to deal with anything military,” complained Bundestag President Bärbel Bas (SPD) in a speech to Bundeswehr recruits last Wednesday. Only to then announce, “Ladies and gentlemen, our Bundeswehr must now be superbly equipped again.” The Ukraine war, she said, makes one “aware again of what we need the Bundeswehr for—after years of austerity, the suspension of conscription and base closures.”

Bas openly declared that the ruling class was concerned with the comprehensive militarization of society and that the new recruits could soon find themselves at war. “When you swear your oath today, you know: At this moment in Ukraine, servicemen and women are defending their homeland and putting their lives on the line to do so. And you know that the case of defence can actually occur for Germany as well,” she declared without batting an eye. “With the turn of the times and the special fund [of €100 billion for the Bundeswehr],” she said, it was now possible “to turn the hardship of war more and more into a virtue of appreciation for the Bundeswehr.”

The occasion for her war speech was the ceremonial swearing in of new recruits on the 78th anniversary of the failed assassination attempt on Adolf Hitler by Wehrmacht officer Claus Schenk Graf von Stauffenberg on July 20, 1944. That the ruling class is now relying on the July 20 assassins in its war offensive is a sign of the times. Stauffenberg and several of his supporters were staunch militarists and themselves long-time Hitler partisans. Contrary to official propaganda, their assassination attempt on the “Führer” had nothing to do with the fight for “freedom” and “democracy,” but was intended to avert a complete military defeat in World War II and secure the interests of German imperialism.



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