

German government steps up armaments drive and sends more tanks to Ukraine

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Following last week's meeting of NATO foreign ministers in Bucharest, the German government is stepping up its arms deliveries to Kiev. According to media reports, Berlin is sending another seven Gepard anti-aircraft tanks to the Ukrainian army. News magazine *Der Spiegel* reports that the tanks are "currently being refurbished by the Munich-based armaments company Krauss-Maffei Wegmann (KMW)."

Germany is playing an increasingly aggressive role in the massive rearmament of the Ukrainian army against Russia. According to the government, the total value of licences issued for arms deliveries until 28 November 2022 now amounts to 1.93 billion euros. The government's official list of "military support for Ukraine" includes the following deliveries for last week alone:

- 3 BIBER armoured bridge laying vehicles
- 10 surface drones (previously: 2)
- 65 border guard vehicles (previously: 53)
- 14,000 sleeping bags (previously: 10,000)
- Mi-24 spare parts
- 30 ambulances

And according to the same list, the following items, among others, are "in preparation/implementation":

- 14 remote-controlled tracked vehicles for support tasks
- 42 mine-clearing tanks
- 435 border protection vehicles
- 6,100 rounds of 155mm artillery ammunition
 - 186,000 rounds of 40mm grenade launcher ammunition
- 5 Dachs armoured engineer vehicles
- 16 Zuzana 2 self-propelled howitzers (joint project with Denmark and Norway)
- 3 IRIS-T SLM air defence systems
- 20 70mm rocket launchers on pick-up trucks with 2,000 rockets

- 5 armoured recovery vehicles
- 5,032 anti-tank hand-held weapons
- 13 BIBER armoured bridge layers

The deliveries are part of NATO's escalation of the war against Russia, which is increasingly directly evoking the danger of a third world war. In Bucharest, NATO foreign ministers agreed on the expansion of the war in Ukraine and the stationing of additional troops on the Russian border.

Representatives of the NATO states spoke out in favour of allowing Ukraine to attack targets in Russia itself. "We should allow the Ukrainians to use weapons to attack missile sites or airfields from which these operations are launched," said Latvian Foreign Minister Edgars Rinkūviņš. Allies should "not fear" an escalation, he added provocatively.

According to a report by the Reuters news agency, the US is indeed already considering delivering GLSDB (Ground-Launched Small Diameter Bomb) munitions to Ukraine. The precision-guided surface-to-surface projectiles have a range of about 150 kilometres, which is twice as far as the artillery systems currently available to Kiev. With these projectiles, it would be possible for the Ukrainian army to attack targets in the northern part of Crimea, for example.

The escalation is supported by the German government. At the Berlin Security Conference, which took place immediately after the NATO meeting, Chancellor Olaf Scholz (Social Democratic Party, SPD) reiterated the goal of defeating Russia in Ukraine. "Russia cannot and will no longer win this war on the battlefield," he declared. We will "continue to support Ukraine for as long as it takes: economically, financially, humanitarily, through the reconstruction of destroyed energy infrastructure now—and also with weapons."

In addition, the Bundeswehr (Armed Forces) is training thousands of Ukrainian soldiers in Germany and massing

its troops in Eastern Europe against Russia.

In order to defend the territory of the Alliance, Germany would “maintain 17,000 soldiers for the NATO Response Force over the next two years,” the Chancellor announced. In 2023, Germany will “once again take over the leadership of NATO’s rapid reaction force” and was already “present in Slovakia with forces of the Army and the Air Force.” The air force was “securing the airspace over Estonia and our navy has increased its presence in the Baltic Sea. And we have permanently strengthened our battle group in Lithuania.”

In his speech, Scholz made clear that Germany’s war aims go far beyond Eastern Europe. He praised the “implementation of the special assets [funding] for the Bundeswehr of 100 billion euros” and boasted: “We are talking here about the largest investment in our armed forces since their existence.” However, the “turn of the times” he had proclaimed was about “much more than just quite a lot of money.” What was needed was “more decisiveness, more willingness to take risks and more efficient structures... from procurement to equipment, from strategy to operations.”

From the beginning, the German ruling class has seen the war in Ukraine provoked by NATO as an opportunity to reassert itself as a leading military power following its historic crimes in two world wars. Now, plans that have long been drawn up to massively rearm and organise Europe militarily under German leadership are being put into practice.

Scholz stressed the need for “a European defence industry that meets the demands of modern armed forces.” In addition, he said, they were working on “improving the military capabilities of the European Union.” This included the “European missile defence shield” he proposed. In the meantime, “14 partners have joined this initiative.”

The German government, a coalition of the SPD, Liberal Democrats (FDP) and Greens, is also pushing ahead with nuclear armament. “As long as states like Russia possess nuclear weapons as part of their threat potential, NATO naturally needs a credible deterrent potential,” Scholz said menacingly. For this reason, the German government “has decided to procure F-35 fighter jets in the coming years and thus continue to make a German contribution to the Alliance’s nuclear sharing in the future.”

Since the historic increase in military spending and the passing of a war budget on 25 November, the tempo has increased. Almost daily, the German government

announces new far-reaching armament projects. In addition to the F-35 fighter jets, Scholz announced the retrofitting of the Puma infantry fighting vehicles and the procurement of snow vehicles. On the same day, the budget committee of the Bundestag (federal parliament) initiated the procurement of more than 600,000 rounds of automatic cannon ammunition for the Puma infantry fighting vehicle.

The return of German militarism is being accompanied by a systematic ideological offensive. At the NATO meeting in Bucharest, Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock (Greens) called Russia’s actions in Ukraine a “breach of civilisation,” a term used in Germany for Hitler’s war of extermination and the Holocaust.

The use of this term for the war in Ukraine is an incredible trivialisation of the historic crimes of German imperialism. Russia’s intervention in Ukraine is reactionary, but it has nowhere near reached the scale of the crimes of the Nazis. If anyone is following in this tradition, it is Baerbock and the German ruling class.

This was also shown by the adoption of the so-called “Holodomor” resolution last Wednesday. By declaring the famine in Ukraine in the early 1930s to be a “genocide,” the Bundestag (federal parliament) accepted a historical falsification that originated in far-right circles.

Significantly, the Left Party also did not vote against the resolution, thus backing the war propaganda. This does not come as a surprise. Its leading representatives—such as Thuringia state Prime Minister Bodo Ramelow or Berlin mayoral candidate Klaus Lederer—bang the drum for arms deliveries to the Ukrainian army, which is riddled with right-wing extremist forces, and even call for the reintroduction of conscription.

The only party that opposes the war madness and arms the growing opposition with an international socialist programme is the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP). We fight to build an international mass movement against war and capitalism and call on all workers and youth: Join the webinar against the war in Ukraine on 10 December and support the SGP’s anti-war election campaign in Berlin!



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