

German parliament agrees purchase of F-35 fighter jets for nuclear war against Russia

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Three weeks after the German government launched its 2023 war budget, a massive arms build-up is underway. On Wednesday, the Bundestag (parliamentary) budget committee released €10 billion for the procurement of 35 US F-35 Lightning II stealth bombers capable of carrying nuclear weapons.

That same day, the Bundeswehr (Armed Forces) Federal Office of Equipment, Information Technology and In-Service Support (BAAINBw) signed the purchase agreement with the US Air Force. According to a statement from the American Embassy in Berlin, the fighters are to be delivered “between 2026 and 2029.” The US Foreign Military Sales Program will “handle the sale, which includes mission planning systems, munitions, logistics and training.”

The acquisition of the nuclear bombers is a declaration of war on the working class and youth in several ways. For one thing, it makes it clear that the ruling class is prepared to wage nuclear war to advance its imperialist interests—even if it means the deaths of billions of people and the potential destruction of the entire planet.

In his government statement on Wednesday, Chancellor Olaf Scholz (Social Democratic Party, SPD) blatantly threatened nuclear power Russia with all-out war: “If necessary, we will defend every single square meter of alliance territory,” he declared. To this end, he said, “the special fund of 100 billion euros has been agreed—the largest investment in our Bundeswehr since its existence.” With the procurement of modern F-35 fighter jets, he said, “We are continuing to make our German contribution to nuclear sharing in the alliance.”

Scholz preferred not to elaborate on what that means. In the event of a nuclear war against Russia, Bundeswehr fighter jets—currently of the Tornado type—would be armed with US nuclear bombs stored in Germany and would also deploy them. The possible armament of the F-35 includes “free-falling nuclear weapons,” according to an article on the official Defence Ministry website.

With the ongoing escalation of the NATO proxy war in Ukraine against Russia, the leading NATO powers not only accept the threat of a nuclear third world war, but they are also actively preparing for it. Air Force Inspector General Ingo Gerhardt openly threatened Russia with the use of nuclear

weapons back in June. “For credible deterrence, we need both the means and the political will to implement nuclear deterrence, if necessary,” he declared.

The *World Socialist Web Site* commented at the time, “The fact that a German general is openly threatening to use nuclear weapons against Russia must be taken as a serious warning. Seventy-seven years after the fall of the Third Reich, a fascist mentality is once again spreading in the ruling class. It is ready to commit the worst crimes once again in order to assert its imperialist interests.”

With the purchase of the F-35s, German war plans are now massively accelerated. When Gerhardt announced the deal on Wednesday, along with Bundeswehr Inspector General Eberhard Zorn and Defence Minister Christine Lambrecht (SPD), he boasted that the procurement of the fighter jets was not only “historic” but “that we are buying the appropriate spare parts [and also ammunition] that will ensure us a high level of operational readiness right at the start.”

Lambrecht herself made it clear that the purchase was part of a comprehensive upgrade of the Bundeswehr. It was “a good day for the Bundeswehr, a good day for national and alliance defence,” she cheered. “Today, we succeeded in getting a procurement worth almost 13 billion euros underway in the Budget Committee.” She added that work was being done at “full speed” to “breathe life into the turn of the times,” proclaimed by Chancellor Scholz at the beginning of the Ukraine war. The “procurements” that had been set in motion concerned “the entire range of the Bundeswehr.”

In addition to the F-35s, the Budget Committee released funds for the procurement of the following weapons systems at its last meeting this year: modern radios for the Army worth almost €3 billion, 140 over-snow vehicles worth €552 million and 118,718 new HK416 assault rifles for around €273 million. In addition, the Puma infantry fighting vehicle is to be upgraded at a cost of €1 billion.

The purchases will be financed from the €100 billion special fund for the Bundeswehr already approved in June. This is just the start of Germany’s biggest rearmament and war offensive since Hitler. “For me, this was now the starting point for implementing our projects from the special fund,” Zorn explained. “That means we will still be submitting a large

number of so-called 25 million [euro] bills to parliament in the next few years.”

Specifically, the inspector general named the following “necessary orders”: Germany’s assumption of command of the NATO spearhead Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) next year; the deployment of a combat-ready Bundeswehr division for NATO by 2025; the deployment of a combat brigade for the European Union, also by 2025; and the readiness “of 20 boats and ships annually” of the German Navy. For all of this, he said, “a reliable rising financial line” was needed.

The “historic” rearmament requires historic attacks on the working class. While billions are gushing into the Bundeswehr, massive cuts are being made in the areas of health, education and social welfare. Adjusted for inflation, the 2023 budget includes the biggest cuts since the end of World War II. The health budget alone will be cut by almost €40 billion (!) from €64.36 billion to €24.48 billion—and this amid a pandemic that has already cost several million lives worldwide.

Hardly any acquisition could sum up the priorities of the ruling class better than the F-35 nuclear bombers: death and destruction are higher priorities for them than life and social progress. The €100 billion special fund is more than four times the health budget and almost five times the education budget (€21.46 billion). The €10 billion now being squandered on fighter jets alone could be used to hire more than 34,000 additional teachers for five years; or nearly 52,000 nurses for the same period in the health care system, which is also completely underfunded.

All parties in the Bundestag are working closely together to push through this militaristic madness, which is destructive in every respect. Lambrecht expressly thanked “the budget holders for making this possible today—with a broad majority even beyond the traffic light coalition” of the SPD, Liberal Democrats (FDP) and Greens. He said it was a “very important sign that the breadth of parliament is behind the Bundeswehr, behind this turn of the times.”

The massive rearmament of the Bundeswehr is also vehemently supported by the Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU) and the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD). Within the federal government, the Greens are taking a particularly aggressive stance. “We are pleased to be able to put the most modern jet in the world in the capable hands of the pilots of our air force,” said Philip Krämer, who sits on the defence committee for the former pacifists. His colleague Sebastian Schäfer stressed that the task now must be to “ensure a functioning and rapid operational readiness.”

Although the Left Party criticizes the purchase of the F-35s and the Bundeswehr special fund in words, it is itself closely involved in the war and rearmament offensive. Its leading representatives, such as Thuringia State Prime Minister Bodo Ramelow and Berlin mayoral candidate Klaus Lederer, explicitly support arms deliveries to Ukraine and even call for

the reintroduction of conscription.

Others, such as former party chairwoman Gesine Lötzsch, sit on both the budget committee and the secretly convened “Special Fund of the Bundeswehr” committee. Speaking to the left-wing party paper *Junge Welt*, Lötzsch recently gave an insight into her activities as a de facto lobbyist for German imperialism. “In the summer, I was in the US with a delegation from the budget committee. There, we talked to politicians and arms manufacturers,” she reported. Then she added cynically, “They already had a precise plan of how they will divide the 100 billion euros among themselves.”

The only party opposing the cartel of warring parties in the Bundestag and the return of German militarism is the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP). In our manifesto for the Berlin state election in February, we write that the SGP is making the vote “a referendum against this hated and illegitimate policy”:

We give a voice and a socialist perspective to the enormous opposition, which is no longer expressed in official politics. The war cannot be stopped and social devastation ended without breaking the power of the banks and corporations and placing them under democratic control.”

The purchase of the F-35s adds urgency to the SGP’s struggle to build an independent international working class movement against capitalism and war. Our central slogans and demands in the campaign are:

- Two world wars are enough! Stop the warmongers!
- Stop the NATO war in Ukraine! No sanctions and arms deliveries!
- €100 billion for kindergartens, schools and hospitals instead of armaments and war!



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