

German Defense Minister Pistorius announces further arms deliveries to Kiev and justifies attacks on Russia

Johannes Stern
25 April 2023

Fourteen months after the reactionary invasion of Ukraine by the Putin regime, the NATO powers are escalating the war offensive against Russia ever more aggressively. At a meeting on Friday, they agreed to massively expand arms supplies to Kiev in support of the Ukrainian army's planned spring offensive. NATO head Jens Stoltenberg also announced that Ukraine would become a member of NATO. The danger of a direct NATO-Russia war is thus becoming increasingly acute.

German imperialism, which already sought to annex Ukraine and subjugate Russia during the First and Second World Wars, is playing an increasingly central role in the escalation of the war. After the meeting of the Ukraine Defense Contact Group at the US Air Force base in Ramstein, German Defense Minister Boris Pistorius declared "how important the endurance and the operational readiness" are now. He stressed Berlin's central role and announced further military support.

"Germany is by far the biggest supporter of Ukraine after the United States, along with the United Kingdom, and is significantly involved in everything with air defense, tanks, artillery, troop capabilities and ammunition," he boasted. In March, 18 "state of the art" Leopard 2 A6 battle tanks and 40 Marder armoured vehicles were delivered to Ukraine. In addition, they will be "equipped with large packages of materiel and spare parts and much-needed ammunition."

Among the supplies were also "very useful tactical support vehicles." Pistorius mentioned the Buffalo salvage vehicle and Badger tankdozer, as well as the bridge-laying and mine-clearing tanks Biber and Wisent. Germany provides "quality and quantity" and is also "one of the strongest trainers for Ukrainian forces." Only a few days ago, the second IRIS-T system with guided missiles and "a Patriot missile unit with 100 missiles" was handed over to Kiev.

Pistorius made no secret of the fact that the German missile systems do not simply serve to protect cities from attacks, but will play a key role in the planned Ukrainian offensive. "We are helping to protect our tanks, which are now operating there, from threats from the air," he said. "Effectiveness at the frontline" is "crucial." He added that there would be no letup. Training for 100 Ukrainian soldiers is beginning on the

Leopard 1 A5 battle tank. About 80 tanks of this type should be delivered "quickly" starting from the middle of the year.

It is becoming increasingly clear that the NATO powers are preparing for a long war of attrition, which will cost hundreds of thousands more lives, can escalate at any time and is already devouring vast sums of money. "It is important that all this persists," Pistorius warned. "Any material" that is delivered into this war has wear and tear, especially if it is "in continuous combat." He said he was "very pleased" that he and his Polish and Ukrainian colleagues had signed a "memorandum of understanding" on "a joint repair hub in Poland" for the entire Leopard 2 fleet.

"This will ensure, close to the Polish-Ukrainian border, that these tanks can be repaired and repaired quickly and when needed—and demand will increase." All this costs "a lot of money," but shows "our determination that we want to persevere." To "achieve this"—the declared goal of the imperialist powers is the complete defeat of the Russian military in Ukraine—"the Bundestag [German parliament] made available up to €12 billion a few weeks ago." He added. "Ukraine can count on Germany as long as it takes."

Pistorius should explain what this means in concrete terms. Is the German government preparing to send ground troops into the war against Russia, a nuclear-armed power, after the battle tanks? How far does the ruling class want to go this time to assert its imperialist interests in the East? During World War II, German imperialism fought a war of extermination that killed about 27 million Soviet citizens and committed the Holocaust. A direct conflict with nuclear-armed Russia would mean the destruction of all of Europe and possibly the entire planet.

The Scholz government and the other leading NATO powers are escalating the war in full awareness that it can lead to a nuclear Armageddon. Just one year ago in April 2022, in an interview with *Der Spiegel*, the German chancellor answered the question on the supply of "heavy weapons" by stating that one must do everything "to avoid a direct military confrontation between NATO and a highly armed superpower such as Russia, a nuclear power." The issue is to "prevent an escalation that leads to a third world war."

The German government is now not only supplying “heavy weapons” but explicitly justifying attacks on Russian territory. It is “completely normal” in such a military conflict, “that the attacked party also moves into the opponent’s territory, for example, to cut off supply routes,” said Pistorius on the eve of the Ramstein meeting on the ZDF program “Maybrit Illner.”

Statements like these come close to a direct declaration of war on Russia. In January, Green Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock declared at a Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe that “we are fighting a war against Russia.” The ruling class is not only concerned with Ukraine and Russia. It uses the war provoked by the NATO powers as a pretext to reestablish itself as a leading military power that can wage full-scale war at any time.

“We need a ready, combat-strong and durable Bundeswehr [German army]... a force that can fulfil its missions from a standstill in its entirety, that is, capable of cold-starting,” Pistorius demanded last Thursday at the presentation of the latest army report in the Bundestag. The report paints a distorted picture of a completely broken and dilapidated army and advocates for the tripling (!) of the Bundeswehr’s special fund from €100 to €300 billion in order to close the “capability gaps.”

The scope of the rearmament plans is gigantic and only comparable to the rearming of the Wehrmacht from the mid-1930s onwards. And as then, despite all official propaganda phrases of “freedom” and “democracy,” the goal is the enforcement of the predatory interests of German imperialism worldwide.

“We must learn to think again in large security policy contexts and longer periods and lines, also and especially we here together,” Pistorius told parliamentarians. The security situation will get “more difficult than easier.” “Not only with a view to Russia, but of course also with a view to the world: most recently in Sudan, but also in the Indo-Pacific and the Sahel region,” he continued.

No one in the Bundestag opposed Pistorius’ wartime madness and militaristic plots for world power. On the contrary, representatives of all government and opposition parties praised the military report unanimously and outdid themselves with calls for a more effective and faster rearmament.

Kerstin Vieregge rejoiced for the Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union faction that the military report finally buried “the fairy tale that comprehensive capabilities [would come] from the special fund.” The sum of €300 billion mentioned in it shows “how enormous the investment needs actually are.”

“The report shows what is needed to make the military pillar of our integrated and broad security policy resilient and sustainable,” said Green Party spokesperson Merle Spellerberg. After all, we expect our soldiers to “fight” in the event of an emergency.

The Left Party, whose leadership fully supports NATO’s war against Russia, struck a similar tone: “One can only be grateful to the military commissioner for this report and the openness with which at least some problems are openly addressed,” Ali al-Dailami said. “The problem is that these are not new and nothing substantial has changed to this day. In recent years, hardly any major procurement project has been carried out without delays, price increases or shortcomings.”

The fundamentally fascist character of the policy of rearmament and war was most evident in the speech of the representative of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD). Hannes Gnauck, the federal chairman of the Junge Alternative für Deutschland, cheered that “this year’s military report ... contains all kinds of criticism, suggestions and demands that the AfD has been making ... for the Bundeswehr for years.”

Now the parliament has “the task” to prepare the army for the “right framework conditions: enough ammunition, functional material and professional equipment. And the political leadership has the duty to create an atmosphere in which young soldiers can say: I am fighting for my German people, and I am proud of it.” A “real turning point” begins “in spirit” and one needs “a Bundeswehr that not only endures in battle, but above all wants to win, to win against the enemy on the battlefield... We need soldiers ready to fight, in whose hearts the fire for Germany is burning.”

The only party that can counteract this militaristic filth is the Socialist Equality Party. Together with our sister parties in the International Committee of the Fourth International, we are holding a worldwide online May Day rally on April 30 to give voice to the widespread opposition to war and fascism and to arm them with a clear understanding of the situation and the necessary political perspective.

The appeal for the rally explains: “Two processes dominate this year’s celebration of the international unity of the working class: the war in Ukraine, which is escalating toward a global conflagration, and an international resurgence of the class struggle. These two processes are profoundly related. The same economic, geopolitical and social contradictions that drive the imperialist ruling elites onto the path of war provide the objective impulse for the radicalization of the working class and the outbreak of revolutionary struggles.”

This year’s May Day rally will advance the socialist programme upon which this struggle must be based. We encourage all workers to register today to attend this event.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact