

German cabinet agrees to new Military Service Law and installs National War Council

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On Wednesday, the German cabinet introduced into parliament (Bundestag) a draft law for a new system of military service. With this, the ruling class is intensifying its efforts to massively expand the Bundeswehr (Armed Forces) and recruit the necessary cannon fodder for German imperialism's upcoming wars. At the same time, the government decided to establish a National Security Council—another step toward militarization and the transformation of the state in an authoritarian direction.

The draft *Military Service Modernization Act* approved by the cabinet provides for the introduction of a new conscription register starting January 1, 2026. All young men between the ages of 18 and 25 must complete a questionnaire; women may do so voluntarily. Suitable candidates will then be summoned for a medical examination.

Beginning in 2027, medical exams will become mandatory for all men. Service is to be made more attractive through significantly higher pay: conscripts will in future be paid the same as short-term soldiers, with net monthly wages exceeding €2,000.

Officially, military service is initially voluntary. However, Defence Minister Boris Pistorius (Social Democratic Party, SPD) made clear that compulsory elements are unavoidable in the medium term: “The moment we establish that [voluntary recruitment] does not work, a decision will have to be made to reintroduce conscription on a mandatory basis,” he stated in an interview with broadcaster Deutschlandfunk.

The aim is to rapidly increase troop strength by 80,000 soldiers to a total of 260,000, in line with NATO requirements. The government wants to use conscription above all to massively expand the reserve. Young recruits are to remain available as reservists after completing their service.

Leading military figures and politicians already openly assume that a voluntary approach will not suffice and that compulsory conscription will soon have to be implemented. André Wüstner, chairman of the Bundeswehr Association, declared: “We have no time. If it works voluntarily, good. Honestly, I don't believe it. That's why we must prepare for compulsory service.” The Christian Democratic

Union/Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU) is demanding that conscription automatically take effect as soon as targets are missed.

Chancellor Friedrich Merz (CDU) has also made no secret of wanting a “conscription army.” He explicitly welcomed the cabinet decision as a return to that path. While he—like Pistorius—still speaks of “practical hurdles” such as a lack of barracks or trainers, both emphasize that the draft law will certainly be toughened in the Bundestag. “No law ever leaves the Bundestag in the same form as it enters,” said Pistorius.

This current return to conscription resembles less the post-World War II war draft and more the historical precedent of 1935: back then, Hitler and the Nazis reintroduced conscription to prepare German imperialism for World War II. Today, too, the reintroduction of conscription is directly tied to aggressive rearmament and war preparations.

Significantly, Pistorius on the same day attended the inauguration of a new Rheinmetall munitions factory in Unterlüß, Lower Saxony—together with Finance Minister, Vice Chancellor and SPD leader Lars Klingbeil and NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte. At full capacity, the plant is set to become Europe's largest munitions factory, producing 350,000 155-millimeter shells annually by 2027. Along with other sites, Rheinmetall aims to reach 1.5 million shells per year and establish itself as the leading producer in the Western world.

Parallel to the military service law, the cabinet approved the creation of a *National Security Council*. Chaired by the chancellor, the council will include the ministers of finance, foreign affairs, interior, justice, economy, defence and others, as well as intelligence agencies and the Bundeswehr. Representatives of federal states, international organizations, think tanks and corporations may also be brought in as needed.

Officially, the council is tasked with providing “strategic foresight” and developing “options for action.” In reality, it is a war council that will centrally coordinate the militarization of all areas of society—without parliamentary or democratic oversight. According to an official government statement, it can “make final decisions unless the constitution or a federal law

opposes it.” In effect, society as a whole is being placed on a war footing and prepared for a permanent state of emergency.

The council directly implements the 2023 *National Security Strategy*, which the WWSWS at the time described as a “blueprint for total war.” That document places all policy—from raw materials to education, health care to climate—under the primacy of “security” and thereby declares it war-relevant. One of the council’s central tasks, according to the government, is to “update the National Security Strategy.”

These legislative initiatives come at a moment when the government is expanding its role as the spearhead of NATO’s war offensive against Russia. Just earlier this week, Klingbeil traveled to Kiev, promised President Volodymyr Zelensky annual military aid of at least €9 billion [\$US10.5 billion] and reaffirmed Germany’s readiness to provide “security guarantees” for Ukraine.

Klingbeil also announced that Germany would massively support Ukraine’s arms production with money and know-how—including long-range attack drones. Ukraine is thus becoming a testing ground for the German arms industry and weapons technology.

In parallel, Klingbeil is preparing a war budget that will triple defence spending to €153 billion by 2029 and raise it long term to five percent of GDP (€225 billion annually). This is to be financed by €1 trillion in new debt—paired with drastic social spending cuts. Merz bluntly stated last weekend: “The welfare state as we have it today is no longer affordable.”

Eighty-four years after the start of Hitler’s war of annihilation against the Soviet Union, German tanks are once again rolling east. With the permanent stationing of a brigade in Lithuania, the Bundeswehr, for the first time since 1945, is deploying a fully equipped combat unit directly on Russia’s border.

The ruling class is thus seamlessly continuing its historic drive: control over Ukraine, access to Russian resources and dominance over the Eurasian landmass. This is the goal of the new German militarism, which—at least for now still closely coordinated with NATO—is working toward independent European action, or rather war-making, under German leadership.

Also on Wednesday, leading news weekly *Der Spiegel* published a commentary by government-aligned think-tanker staffers Christian Mölling and Claudia Major titled “Europe Now Needs Its Own ‘Way of War.’” By this they mean Germany and the European Union (EU) must acquire the capability to plan and wage major wars independently of the US—and rapidly build the necessary military structures, including nuclear armament.

Such calls, together with the reintroduction of conscription, the creation of a National Security Council and massive rearmament, make it clear: the ruling class is once again actively preparing for war and is ready—after its horrific crimes in two world wars—to commit new ones, sacrificing an entire

generation for the predatory interests of German imperialism. This madness must be stopped.

The International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE), the youth organization of the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) and the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), sharply reject the government’s plans and make clear what is at stake:

We say no to conscription—in whatever form, at whatever time! We are not cannon fodder for the profits of the rich! Eighty years after the end of the Second World War, the German government wants to line up an entire generation again, ready to sacrifice their lives for the economic interests of the ruling class. The return of conscription is part of the militarisation of society as a whole.

The IYSSE statement denounces the “pacifism of the affluent middle class, who support war as long as it does not affect them personally. For us, stopping conscription means stopping war escalation!” It also rejects the positions of organizations such as the SPD youth wing (Jusos), the Green Youth and the Left Party, who nominally criticize or reject conscription but agree that the Bundeswehr must be expanded as a supposed “defensive army.”

And it provides clear orientation and perspective for the widespread opposition to conscription, militarism, and war: “A fight against conscription means a fight against war and its root—capitalism.” The IYSSE call for building an independent movement of the working class that is international, anti-capitalist and socialist, and that confronts imperialist war with the perspective of social revolution.

The decisive task is to consciously organize resistance on this basis. Youth, workers and all who want to prevent the madness of a third world war must unite, reject the war plans and draw the necessary conclusion: the building of the SGP in Germany and worldwide of the ICFI as the new revolutionary leadership. Only in this way can the catastrophe of another world war be prevented and a peaceful, socialist future won.



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