

Germany rearms for war with Russia in 2026 war budget

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With the votes of the governing Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU) and Social Democrats (SPD), the Bundestag, Germany's federal parliament, passed the budget for 2026 on Friday. It is a war budget. Eighty years after the unprecedented crimes of the Wehrmacht and Hitlerite fascism, the ruling class is once again pursuing a massive rearmament programme that breaks with all post-war restrictions and is systematically preparing Germany for a third world war—with Russia as its main target.

Defence spending will rise to €108.2 billion next year—the highest military budget in the history of the Federal Republic. It consists of the regular defence budget of €82.69 billion and an additional €25.51 billion from the Bundeswehr's (German Armed Forces) special fund approved in 2022. Compared to 2025 alone, this means an increase of more than €20 billion.

This historic increase is the prelude to a gigantic rearmament programme that, in terms of its scale and objectives, is openly modelled on the Nazi war machine of the 1930s. By 2029, the defence budget is set to rise to more than €150 billion. If we add the “infrastructure-related” war expenditures in the transport, research and economics ministries, around five percent of Germany's gross domestic product will then be spent on military purposes—around €215 billion annually.

After the Bundeswehr's €100 billion special fund, which was approved in 2022, expires, the government made another trillion euros available by lifting the debt brake on military spending and creating a €500 billion special fund for infrastructure—an unprecedented military restructuring of society as a whole.

The biggest beneficiaries of the budget are the German arms companies—the same ones that already armed Hitler's Wehrmacht. According to the latest SIPRI Arms Trade Report, the four German companies in the ranking—Rheinmetall, Diehl, ThyssenKrupp Marine Systems and Hensoldt—already increased their revenues from arms sales by 36 percent last year.

This murderous business will continue to surge. The new budget allocates €47.88 billion for military procurement alone—€22.37 billion from the defence budget and €25.51 billion from special funds. This is an increase of almost 50 percent over the current €32.3 billion.

Another €7.56 billion are earmarked for the maintenance and repair of existing equipment, and €1.58 billion for defence research, development and testing. Personnel expenses for the Bundeswehr are rising to €24.71 billion; €11.31 billion are available for barracks, accommodation and real estate.

And all this is just the beginning. Almost every day, the Ministry of Defence announces new armament projects. On Thursday, it was revealed that the Bundeswehr intends to procure up to 3,000 Boxer battle tanks. The so-called “Arminius” project has a volume of €40 billion and will go to Artec – a consortium of Rheinmetall and KNDS Germany. It would be one of the largest arms contracts in the history of the Federal Republic and a central component of the “tank republic of Germany” demanded by politicians and the media.

According to internal documents, the Bundeswehr's planned investments in the land, air, sea, space and cyber sectors total €377 billion. In addition to new tanks, artillery systems and fighter jets, this also includes drone swarms, space satellites and long-range missiles.

Particularly controversial is the planned purchase of 400 Tomahawk cruise missiles with a range of over 2,000 kilometres. This would enable Germany to attack targets deep inside Russian territory. The new Army Inspector Christian Freuding, who is systematically intensifying Germany's war preparations against Russia, told the Bundeswehr Support Group last week that a first “deep strike battery” with Tomahawks on the mobile “Typhon” system would be set up as early as 2026.

Freuding went on to announce that the army would have to fundamentally change its traditional doctrine of engagement. “Distance capability is a priority in all areas.” Until now, the Bundeswehr's land forces have been designed to have

superior duelling capabilities in close combat. In the future, the focus will be on immediately striking an enemy at a great distance while remaining in constant motion to avoid counterattacks. “If this succeeds, the initiative can be gained even if the enemy has a clear quantitative superiority,” said the Army Inspector. “Fire and manoeuvre” is the new operational principle.

This is not a defence concept. It is preparation for offensive operations against Russia, a nuclear power, which would end in a devastating Third World War.

In his speech on the military budget in the Bundestag, Defence Minister Boris Pistorius made clear the comprehensive imperialist goals pursued by the German government. First, in the style of a warmongering militarist during the First World War, he railed against a “capitulation peace” in Ukraine: “There must be no false peace, no capitulation peace.”

This is the familiar propaganda that turns reality on its head and obscures the predatory interests of German imperialism. As in the German Empire and under Hitler, the aim is to dominate Europe militarily in order to become a world power. The immediate focus is on the escalation of war against Russia, but the conflict with the US is also coming to a head with Trump’s Ukraine deal, which Pistorius made no secret of in his speech.

He declared: “We must redefine our position on the geopolitical chessboard. We do not know which alliances we can still trust in the future and how long they will last.” NATO must therefore “become more European” and Europeans must “do more for our defence.” In other words, Germany and the EU must build up an independent military power that can act independently of Washington if necessary.

The extent to which preparations for war have already progressed is underlined by a recent report in the *Wall Street Journal*. Under the headline “Germany’s Secret Plan for War With Russia,” the newspaper describes how the more than 1,200-page “Operation Plan Germany” (OPLAN DEU) was developed.

The plan describes in detail how, in the event of war, up to 800,000 German, US and NATO soldiers are to be deployed to the east via ports, highways, rivers and rail lines. Germany is being organised as the central hub of a future NATO ground war against Russia. The concept calls for an “all-of-society approach to war:” the merging of civilian and military infrastructure and the mobilisation of the entire society for war.

The working class is to pay for the war policy in every respect: As cannon fodder on the battlefield and in the form of massive attacks on social and democratic rights to finance and enforce the war policy. Nevertheless, the war plans are

supported by all parties in the Bundestag.

The far-right Alternative for Germany’s (AfD) defence policy spokesman and former Bundeswehr officer Rüdiger Lucassen emphasised that the ruling class is dependent on the fascists to implement its insane war and armament plans. “Our people are ready to defend Germany in an emergency. Our country cannot afford to do without these patriots.”

The Greens also criticise the government from the right. At their party conference over the weekend, they called for even more aggressive action against Russia—including the delivery of Taurus cruise missiles to Ukraine and a general registration of all young people as part of the reintroduction of compulsory military service.

The Left Party is no different. In his speech on the defence budget, Left Party spokesman Dietmar Bartsch castigated “Russia’s military terror,” denounced Moscow as an “aggressor” and backed Western support for Ukraine. His only concern about the war budget was that its size was “an explosive device for social cohesion.” After approving the €1 trillion war package in the Bundesrat, Germany’s upper chamber of parliament, and enabling Merz’s quick election as chancellor, the Left Party fears a social explosion. That is why it is providing the government backing.

The massive rearmament and war preparations are meeting with growing opposition among the population. Strikes and protests are forming throughout Europe—in Belgium and Italy, where general strikes lasting several days took place last week, in France, and increasingly in Germany as well.

The nominally “left” parties, trade unions and pseudo-left organisations, which in some cases verbally support the strikes and protests, do not represent the interests of workers and youth, but seek to control them and subordinate them to the capitalist governments. But the warmongering of the ruling class stems from the capitalist profit system itself, which is in a historic crisis and, as in the past, is relying on fascism and war.

The Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) and its European and international sister parties in the International Committee of the Fourth International are the only force consistently opposing this path to catastrophe. We give voice to the opposition to war and link it to the necessary political perspective: the building of an international socialist movement to overthrow the capitalist system—the only way to prevent a Third World War.



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