

On NATO's eastern flank: German government seeks to transform regional airport into military fortress

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Since 2024, Germany's northern airspace has been systematically converted into a military NATO focal point. The declared goal of the German government and European Union is to close the "Baltic defence gap" on the "eastern flank facing Russia" as quickly as possible.

This makes the location an essential building block in the aggressive rearmament of German imperialism. Defence Minister Boris Pistorius (Social Democratic Party, SPD) leaves no doubt that work is consciously being done towards an open military confrontation with Russia.

In two world wars, the German bourgeoisie expanded brutally to the East, leaving behind scorched earth and committing the most monstrous crimes. Today, the German imperialists are openly linking back to this tradition: driving forward the transformation of Germany into Europe's leading military power to expand their military and political weight, especially in Northern and Eastern Europe.

To this end, the Bundeswehr (Armed Forces) wants to transform the civilian Rostock-Laage airport, located about 30 kilometres from the centre of the East German port city of Rostock and directly bordering the military "Laage Air Base," into a military fortress.

Officially, since mid-December, the Bundeswehr has been examining the takeover of the airport area, which has operated under civilian control since the 1990s. This is necessary due to the "changed security situation," which necessitates a "significant growth of the armed forces," including "infrastructural needs," a spokeswoman for the Ministry of Defence stated in mid-January 2026. Numerous properties nationwide are also being examined.

Laage Air Base is one of the four central Eurofighter locations in Germany, with approximately 920 military personnel and 35 Eurofighter combat jets, forming the backbone of the German combat aircraft fleet, with a total arsenal of some 138 Eurofighters.

With its geographical location on Germany's northern coast, only around 700 kilometres as the crow flies from Kaliningrad, it is at the same time one of the most geo-strategically favourable German air bases for rapid access to the Baltic. Under good conditions, and at combat speed (approx. 1,900 km/h), a Eurofighter could reach the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad (formerly Königsberg) in about 20 minutes.

The Luftwaffe (Air Force) maintains the only pilot school

nationwide for Eurofighter pilots here, and also monitors the airspace and undertakes interception flights over the Baltic Sea with its "Quick Reaction Alert" (*Alarmrotte*—two armed Eurofighters). Temporarily, this was increased by a second *Alarmrotte*. The squadron regularly participates in NATO operations, such as "Operation Eastern Sentry" in September 2025.

In June 2025, broadcaster NDR reported that the Bundeswehr had earmarked investments amounting to around €1 billion [!] in the coming 10 to 15 years for the further expansion of the location.

The planned investments are intended to "modernise" the runway, energy supply, ammunition depots, squadron and command posts as well as protective structures (against shelling and fire) for the Eurofighter fleet and ammunition such as guided missiles. In truth, the military striking power and protective capability against counter-attack are being increased considerably.

The conversion and expansion plans for Laage Air Base are not an isolated case. They fit into the Bundeswehr's operational capability and digital networking "Target Image," in which the future Rostock-Laage air base, together with the maritime tactical NATO headquarters "CTF Baltic" in Rostock, is to play a central role in a digital and fully networked "air defence infrastructure" on NATO's eastern flank.

Even in the unlikely event that the airport's previous mixed use (military and civilian) should be maintained for the time being, the airport is being transformed into a fortress from which the new German-European great power policy of Chancellor Friedrich Merz can be aggressively advanced against Russia.

With "Operation Plan Germany" (OPLAN DEU), the Merz government is ensuring that all civilian capacities and infrastructure are subordinated to the needs of the military. Responsibilities for a military emergency were already settled in Berlin at the end of last month—with the explicit goal of making Germany a host nation and logistical hub for allied troops. The integration of airports, railways, municipal utilities, hospitals and rescue forces into such scenarios means the de facto militarisation of entire branches of civil administration and supply.

For some time now, the Luftwaffe has been practicing landing its Eurofighters at civilian airports, which "in an emergency" would become transshipment points for troops, materiel and fuel—and thus a regular target for the opposing side.

For the Baltic Sea region, which is heavily dependent on tourism, the conversion of Rostock-Laage into a purely military airport would be associated with considerable disadvantages in every respect. Although Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania's largest regional airport receives a comparatively low flight volume—around 10,900 flights, including civilian transport flights—and about 36,000 passengers (2025), numerous jobs in civilian tower and ground operations as well as in tourism and adjacent economic sectors would nevertheless be endangered.

Ira Lauth, managing director of the affected operating company, appeared taken by surprise by the Bundeswehr plans. So far, we had “worked well with the Luftwaffe” and “committed to a joint investment in a new instrument landing system at the end of 2025. We want to help provide personnel for the tower,” Lauth told broadcaster ntv.

The minister president of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, Manuela Schwesig (Socialist Democratic Party, SPD), and Rostock's Mayor Eva-Maria Kröger (Left Party) merely criticised the economic losses.

“From our point of view, civilian operations should be continued. If the federal government ends its examination with a different result, an end to civilian flight operations would be a loss for the Rostock region,” said Kröger.

This attitude is not surprising. Paying some tame lip service against rearmament, and demands for a “boon” for the civilian sector and not just for the Bundeswehr, does not change the fact that the Left Party supported the federal government's enormous militarisation package and budget items at state level that shift the costs of rearmament onto the working class.

In March 2025, representatives of the Left Party in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania voted in the Bundesrat (Upper House of Parliament) for the federal government's trillion-euro credits for rearmament and military infrastructure spending. And, while at state level, the Left Party had trumpeted in December that it supported young people in the fight against conscription, and cynically demanded “a clear rejection of rearmament,” it has not wasted a word on the expansion of Rostock port and Rostock-Laage airport into military hubs for German imperialism and NATO.

The same applies to the party at federal level. After it had supported the astronomical war credits, it then helped quickly elect Merz as chancellor in the parliamentary vote. The Left Party essentially supports the government's war course, spreads the lie of Russia's “unprovoked” attack on Ukraine and, with a view to the Trump administration and the growing instability of the NATO alliance, demands greater military independence from the US.

For example, party co-leader Jan von Aken declared his support for the Bundeswehr in an ntv interview last week, because, “We need strong EU and national defence, and neither works only with cotton balls.”

Unashamedly, he adopted the federal government's war logic. “Armament is also needed, that is part of it,” adding, “I do not want to think within the framework of NATO, but within the framework of the EU. But of course, we need mutual defence obligations. We cannot throw countries like the Baltic states, Poland or Finland to the wolves [Russia].”

This is the language of warmongers! And it is no coincidence. The precursor to the Left Party, the Stalinist party of state (SED/PDS) in the former East Germany, actively supported the introduction of capitalism and thus the prerequisite for the return of German militarism. At the same time, wherever it governs with the SPD and Greens at state level, it enforces the necessary social attacks to shift the horrendous costs of militarisation onto the population.

The conversion of the Rostock-Laage air base into a pure NATO base with increased security status—like the CTF Baltic—is equally threatening and de facto illegal.

With the stationing not only of German but also of NATO pilots—as well as their training and deployment—Berlin would again break the Two Plus Four Treaty, with which the reintroduction of capitalism on the territory of the former East Germany was sealed. It stipulates that no foreign armed forces and nuclear weapons or their carriers may be stationed in or transferred to East Germany. Russia already reacted to the inauguration of the CTF Baltic in 2024 by summoning the German ambassador Alexander Graf Lambsdorff and threatening a “corresponding response from the Russian side.”

That Berlin is systematically undermining the foundation of the Two Plus Four Treaty shows the ruthlessness of the German and European ruling class, and once again reveals their goal of provoking a war with the nuclear power Russia, and accepting the annihilation of all life in Europe.

At the same time, Laage is part of a massive European rearmament programme that underpins Germany's claim to a military leadership role. This includes the expansion of satellite networks, the militarisation of space and the expansion of its own long-range capabilities, aimed at military independence of the EU states from the US.

This course increases the danger of war and, at the same time, the dominance of the military over civil society. As in the US under the influence of Wall Street, Silicon Valley and the Trump administration, the rulers in Europe are increasingly resorting to authoritarian means and right-wing extremist forces to secure their profits and economic and geopolitical dominance.

This policy requires comprehensive attacks on the working and living conditions of the working class and is provoking growing resistance. The spiral of rearmament, repression and social destruction can only be stopped by the international working class organised in a conscious struggle against the capitalist system.



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