

With new frigates and naval bases: Germany arms its navy for war against Russia

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The German government is rapidly advancing the rearmament of the German Navy and preparations for a direct war against Russia. Within a matter of days, plans for a new naval base in Emden, the procurement of eight frigates costing approximately €11.6 billion, and the multibillion-euro expansion of Bremerhaven into a NATO military logistics hub were announced or further specified. These decisions are part of Germany's comprehensive transition to a war footing and underscore Berlin's ambition to assume an increasingly leading military role within NATO.

The measures come amid NATO's continuing escalation of its confrontation with Russia despite explicit nuclear warnings from Moscow. While Chancellor Friedrich Merz (CDU) announced the development and delivery of additional long-range weapons systems in Kiev in early October, the Bundeswehr is creating the military infrastructure for a large-scale war that could extend from the Baltic Sea across the North Atlantic and deep into Russian territory.

On October 5, Defence Minister Boris Pistorius (SPD) announced at a press conference in Emden the decision to establish a second major North Sea base for the German Navy, alongside Wilhelmshaven, at Rysumer Nacken on the Ems estuary. The planned facility will cover up to 450 hectares, have approximately five kilometres of piers and accommodate up to 2,000 military and civilian personnel. Among other things, berths are planned for seven frigates, ten minesweepers and ten tugboats.

The investment costs will run into billions of euros. The base is expected to achieve initial operational capability in the early 2030s, with full operational capability targeted for 2033 or 2034. So far, a declaration of intent has been signed; the precise design of the facilities and the final deployment of ships have yet to be determined.

Pistorius left no doubt about the military objectives. Germany currently has the smallest navy in the history of the Bundeswehr, while facing the broadest range of missions. The navy therefore has to grow, and it will grow. Along with the Baltic Sea, the North Sea and North Atlantic were of decisive strategic importance.

The new Chief of the Navy, Vice Admiral Wilhelm Tobias Abry, explicitly identified the North Sea and North Atlantic as priority areas for the German Navy within NATO defence planning. The second base is intended to create additional capacity for operations, logistics and the deployment of military forces. Warships currently stationed in the Baltic Sea must also be capable of being transferred to the North Sea if necessary in the event of war.

Pistorius also stressed that distributing the fleet across several locations would increase its operational capabilities in a crisis. This is therefore not merely about additional berths, but about creating a decentralised military infrastructure capable of remaining operational under wartime conditions. Emden's civilian port facilities could also explicitly be used for troop deployments.

Just three days later, on October 8, the Bundestag's Budget Committee approved the procurement of four additional MEKO A-200 DEU frigates, after four ships had already been authorised in July. This brings the

planned total to eight of these warships, which specialise in anti-submarine warfare, to be procured from TKMS.

According to current figures, the first four frigates will cost approximately €6.3 billion, with the additional four costing another €5.3 billion. The first ship is scheduled for delivery at the end of 2029, with the remaining vessels to follow in quick succession. They will replace the originally planned F126-class frigates, whose procurement was discontinued following problems with the Dutch Damen shipyard.

According to the Defence Ministry, the frigates are intended primarily for deployment in the North Sea and Baltic Sea regions, the Atlantic and the High North. Their central task is to combat enemy submarines—particularly as part of NATO operations against Russia's Northern Fleet and to secure control over the strategic sea lanes between North America and Europe.

“Fight tonight. Fight tomorrow.”

The war plans underlying these decisions are revealed in the strategic document *Kurs Marine* (“Navy Course”), published by the Bundeswehr in May 2025. The approximately 40-page document is a detailed blueprint for transforming Germany's naval forces for a major war, particularly against Russia.

The military-geographical analysis alone is revealing. The document identifies the North Atlantic, including the Norwegian Sea, as well as the North Sea and Baltic Sea as central areas of operation. Particular importance is attached to the so-called GIUK Gap between Greenland, Iceland and the United Kingdom. It is strategically significant for monitoring Russian submarines and securing NATO's transatlantic supply routes.

The strategic planning extends from the American Atlantic coast to the eastern Baltic Sea. In a war against Russia, enormous numbers of American and European troops, weapons and quantities of ammunition would have to be transported to Europe by sea and then moved to the front.

However, the navy is by no means planning only defensive escort and protection operations. The strategy paper explicitly calls for disrupting and cutting off enemy supply routes as far as their ports. Under the heading *Maritime Strike*, it also describes the capability to launch long-range attacks from warships and submarines against military targets deep inland.

In the Baltic Sea, the navy is to use these capabilities to attack enemy missile positions and other military installations on land. Alongside larger warships, unmanned systems, drones and smaller platforms—that are difficult to detect—are envisaged for these operations.

The naval infantry is also being reorganised for offensive operations.

Instead of concentrating on protection and security duties, it is to be capable of seizing and controlling militarily significant coastal areas, islands and ports. The document explicitly calls for a reorientation toward offensive operations in the Baltic Sea region.

The entire fleet is being geared toward these tasks. The original force structure envisaged for 2035 includes six F127 air-defence frigates, six F126 anti-submarine frigates, three to four F125 frigates, nine to twelve submarines, numerous corvettes, minehunters and combat boats, as well as large numbers of unmanned surface, underwater and aerial systems. The new MEKO procurement alters these original plans but maintains the fundamental orientation toward large-scale naval warfare.

The timetable is decisive. Under the heading “*Fight tonight. Fight tomorrow,*” the naval leadership demands both the long-term construction of a powerful fleet and the immediate achievement of the highest possible level of war readiness. The existing forces are to become significantly more capable by 2029.

To achieve this, ships are to be deployed more frequently and for longer periods, their armaments strengthened, ammunition stocks increased, and new systems introduced through accelerated procurement or leasing. In future, two-thirds of the fleet are to be maintained at high or full operational readiness at all times—instead of the current situation in which only one-third is fully combat-ready.

Naval infrastructure is also to be prepared for every phase of escalation in a conflict. New bases, decentralised command structures, protected shipyards, depots and arsenals are intended to ensure that the navy can continue fighting even under direct attack.

The document concludes with a remarkably explicit instruction to all personnel: “peacetime operations” are a thing of the past. In other words, the navy is now operating in “wartime mode.” It must be able to prove itself in battle. The final sentence reads: “It is not ships that fight, but people.”

German ports as military logistics hubs

The new base in Emden is a direct implementation of these strategic objectives. The same applies to the expansion of Bremerhaven into the so-called *Deployment Hub Bremerhaven 2031*.

On September 29, Pistorius, Bremen Mayor Andreas Bovenschulte (SPD) and representatives of the port logistics company BLG signed a declaration of intent for the project. By 2031, approximately €1.35 billion is earmarked in the federal defence budget for port, transport and airport infrastructure suitable for military use. This is supplemented by more than €212 million from Bremen’s special port infrastructure fund.

The plans include new heavy-load handling areas and bridges, upgrades to quays and harbour basins, and the expansion of transport connections. Bremen Airport is also part of the programme.

The objective is to transport large numbers of American and other NATO troops, together with tanks, ammunition and heavy military equipment, through Germany to the alliance’s eastern flank. Pistorius explicitly stated that, in a crisis, tens of thousands of soldiers would have to be supplied in Bremerhaven on their way east.

These measures implement central provisions of the secret and continuously updated *Operations Plan Germany (Operationsplan Deutschland)*. It specifies how government agencies, businesses, transport infrastructure and civilian organisations are to support the Bundeswehr and allied armed forces in periods of heightened tension and war.

The extent to which preparations have already advanced was demonstrated in late September by the *Red Storm Charlie* exercise in Hamburg. From September 24 to 26, approximately 1,700 members of the

Bundeswehr, government agencies, civilian relief organisations and businesses jointly rehearsed military troop movements and responses to sabotage, drone attacks and other threats to infrastructure. Even Hamburg’s harbour ferries were incorporated into the simulated troop movements.

The exercises explicitly took place under conditions in which neither a state of tension nor a state of defence had been declared. Military mobilisation is therefore already being prepared under peacetime conditions, while cooperation between civilian institutions and the Bundeswehr is being systematically rehearsed.

The Left Party supports the war drive in Bremen

The role of the Left Party in the expansion of Bremerhaven is particularly revealing. The party has been part of Bremen’s state government since 2019 and holds the position of Senator for Economic Affairs, Ports and Transformation, occupied by Kristina Vogt. Vogt explicitly supports the military transformation of the port.

In the Senate’s official press release of September 29, she described the project as “a really strong signal and good news for Bremerhaven as a business location.” She explicitly defended the decision to upgrade existing civilian port facilities to meet military requirements rather than construct a separate military port.

This is not an isolated incident. In March 2025, the two state governments in Bremen and Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, both of which include the Left Party, voted in the Bundesrat in favour of the constitutional amendment that cleared the way for virtually unlimited additional military spending by exempting it from the debt brake.

The Bremen Left Party itself confirmed at the time that the state’s approval had also come about through the votes of its senators Kristina Vogt and Claudia Bernhard.

This exposes the true character of the Left Party as a party of austerity and war. While protesting against rearmament in occasional speeches, it supports one of the central logistical measures for NATO’s military readiness in Bremen. It thus helps implement the fundamental decisions of Germany’s military and war policy, presenting them as an opportunity for regional economic development.

While the state government supported by the Left Party is providing hundreds of millions of euros for military infrastructure, it is simultaneously imposing austerity measures on workers and social institutions. Since July, civil servants have had to work an additional hour per week without a corresponding pay increase. In August, the age-related reduction in teaching hours for teachers was abolished entirely. Publicly funded social institutions are generally receiving no inflation adjustment in 2026. And in September, the Senate adopted further departmental savings targets totalling around €41 million.

From the standpoint of the Left Party as well, workers and young people are to bear the costs of militarisation—through social cuts, the destruction of public services and ultimately their deployment as soldiers on the battlefields.



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