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## Germany's war offensive: Berlin approves delivery of 100 self-propelled howitzers to Ukraine

According to media reports, Germany's federal government has approved the delivery of 100 self-propelled howitzer 2000s to Ukraine. Berlin will thereby increase its already massive weapons deployments many times over. A spokesman for the Ministry of Economic Affairs estimated the cost of the howitzers at €1.7 billion. So far, Berlin has supplied arms worth €600 million to Kiev.



A self-propelled howitzer

The massive deal was concluded behind the scenes two weeks ago. According to information provided by *Der Spiegel*, the Ministry of Economic Affairs, headed by Robert Habeck (Green Party), granted the German armaments group Krauss-Maffei Wegmann (KMW) a permit for the production of the howitzers on July 13. Only two days earlier,

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KMW submitted the relevant permit request. At KMW, “the production of the weapon systems should now be started immediately.”

The immediate aim of the delivery of howitzers is to escalate the NATO proxy war against Russia in Ukraine and to ensure it continues over a long period of time. “The production of the howitzers is expected to last for several years, so it is primarily a question of strengthening the Ukrainian army in the long term,” commented *Der Spiegel*. However, the units already delivered are now playing a role on the front.

A report on the official website of the German Armed Forces (Bundeswehr) praised the effectiveness of howitzers. “Where they are deployed regionally, they increase the combat worthiness of the Ukrainian armed forces by their range, by their combat power, by their tactical capabilities and also by modern ammunition,” stated Colonel Dietmar Felber, who trains Ukrainian soldiers in Idar-Oberstein on howitzers.

The entire report underscores the central and active role of the Bundeswehr in the war in Ukraine. The training of the Ukrainian soldiers has been “continuing at full throttle,” and the Ukrainian artillery soldiers trained by him are now on the front line, Felber boasted. “We have connections to this battalion. They were in combat from the beginning, and they are successful in combat,” he remarked. This creates “a feeling of satisfaction and above all of pride.”

Statements such as these make clear the militaristic and criminal tradition the ruling class is reconnecting with. Eighty-one years after the Wehrmacht’s war of annihilation against the Soviet Union, German soldiers and politicians rejoice in the deaths of Russian and Ukrainian soldiers. According to media reports, hundreds die every day in the artillery fire at the front. And yet the ruling class continues to expand its military support for the pro-Western regime in Kiev.

On Wednesday, the Ministry of Defense announced on Twitter that it would “support Ukraine with the delivery of more heavy weaponry, ammunition and training in Germany.” Ten self-propelled howitzer 2000s, three Mars II multiple rocket launchers and five Cheetah anti-aircraft guns have already arrived in Ukraine. “Further materiel will follow shortly,” the ministry wrote.

According to the ever-increasing overview of the federal government “on German lethal and non-lethal military support provided to Ukraine,” in recent days there has also been a delivery of “33 M113 armored troop transporters with munition.” In the section “Support services in preparation/implementation,” the following items have been added since the beginning of the week:

- 21 M113 armored troop transporters with munition
- 25 Cheetah anti-aircraft guns including approximately 6,000 rounds of anti-aircraft ammunition
- 10 HMMWV vehicles (8x ground radar carriers, 2x Jammer/drone carriers)
- 200 commercial trucks
- 4 drone defense systems

The war aims associated with these arms shipments are clear. NATO and Berlin are pursuing the goal of continuing the war until Russia’s military defeat. “We support Ukraine—as long as it needs this support: economically, on the humanitarian front, financially and through the supply of weapons,” wrote Chancellor Olaf Scholz in a recent guest article for the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*.

Already in the First and Second World Wars, the German ruling class pursued the goal of subjugating Russia and also controlling Ukraine, which was part of the Soviet Union during World War II. Now it wants to be at the forefront once again when it comes to the division and looting of the resource-rich and geostrategically critical regions of Eurasia.

To this end, Berlin is not only flooding Ukraine with weapons, but is systematically working to expand its military influence throughout Eastern Europe. Earlier this week, Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock (Greens) visited the Czech Republic and Slovakia. In Bratislava, she promised her Slovak counterpart Ivan Korcok a long-term deployment of German soldiers and anti-aircraft missiles. “The Patriots will stay as long as you need them here,” she said. The presence of the German military in Eastern Europe is “not a flash in the pan.”

In the Czech capital Prague, Baerbock announced that the negotiations between Germany and the Czech Republic on a so-called tank circular swap to support Ukraine were about to be concluded. Berlin already agreed with Prague in May to provide the Czech army with

15 German “Leopard 2” tanks so that the Czech government can deliver 20 Soviet-produced tanks to Kiev.

According to information from the Air Force, four Eurofighters from the Tactical Air Force Squadron 71 “Richthofen” from Wittmund and one Eurofighter from the Tactical Air Force Squadron 31 “Boelke” from Nörvenich transferred to the Estonian Aemari Air Force Base on Wednesday. From August 1, they will take over the so-called Baltic Air Policing, i.e., the surveillance of NATO airspace in the Baltic States, for nine months. For the Bundeswehr, it is the first such operation since the beginning of the war in Ukraine.

The German military presence in Eastern Europe—additional combat troops are stationed in Lithuania and Romania—increases the risk of a direct war with the nuclear-armed power Russia. At the same time, the Bundeswehr is primarily using arms deliveries to Kiev to boost Germany’s own arms industry. The same companies that were centrally involved in the war economy of the Nazis and upgraded the Wehrmacht within a very short time for the Second World War are once again rubbing their bloody hands.

KMW, which builds the howitzers, operated under the name Krauss-Maffei during the Nazi era. According to Wikipedia, during the Nazi dictatorship, prisoners of war and concentration camp prisoners from the more than 400 camps and shelters in the greater Munich area were committed to forced labor in addition to so-called “Eastern Workers.” In 1938, the 60-hectare Munich-Allach site was expanded. The company headquarters are still located there today.

The armament giant Rheinmetall, which is supposed to supply KMW with parts such as the chassis of the self-propelled howitzers, also exploited thousands of forced laborers during the Third Reich and played a key role in rearmament. Under the name Rheinmetall-Borsig, the company was part of the state-owned company Reichswerke Hermann Göring and thus directly integrated into the planned preparation for war.

The German government has used Putin’s reactionary invasion of Ukraine, provoked by NATO’s encirclement of Russia, to initiate the largest rearmament programme since Hitler. Only three days after the beginning of the war, Scholz announced in parliament (Bundestag) the “Bundeswehr Special Fund” in the amount of €100 billion. The fund is mainly being used to implement “major national projects.”

Since the announcement, the armaments companies have been massively strengthened with one armaments deal following on the heels of another. The decision to procure dozens of nuclear-weapon-ready F-35 stealth bombers—the purchase price of \$8.4 billion was approved by the US government yesterday—was followed by the plan to set up a national missile defence system. Tanks and warships are also on their way.

In mid-July, Rheinmetall announced that the Ministry of Defense would order 111 Puma tanks. The contract, which is to be finalized in September, is part of the comprehensive rearmament of Germany's ground forces. In the end, the number of Puma tanks could be even higher, said Defense Minister Christine Lambrecht (SPD). The final number of units will be decided “only when the structure of the army is finalised.”

Also in July, the German government acquired the insolvent shipyard MV Werft in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania. “For the Ministry of Defence and the German Armed Forces, this is a major step towards improving the material readiness of the navy,” said the official press release of the Ministry of Defence on July 7.

Lambrecht spoke of an “historic day.” With the purchase of the shipyard, the “Federal Republic is entering new territory,” the “challenges” of which are known. But she stressed that she had already said at the beginning of her term that there were “big barriers to overcome.” And one of them was “the poor material readiness of the Bundeswehr. Especially in the navy.” But now, “lack of capacity and long delays should be a thing of the past.”

All of this must be taken as a serious warning. If the German ruling class thinks that after its terrible crimes in two world wars it can once again direct the entire economic and social life towards war, it is mistaken. Resistance is growing among workers and young people who bear all the costs of militarism—through exploding prices, social devastation, the destruction of their democratic rights and as cannon fodder on the front lines. Armed with an international socialist perspective, they will prevent a new eruption of world war and barbarism.

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