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## **German government increases military spending for war against Russia**

The Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) and the *World Socialist Web Site* strongly condemn the German government's rearmament and war offensive.

Last Friday, the Budget Committee of the Bundestag (federal parliament) approved the draft bill of the Social Democrat-led Defence Ministry that provides for a massive increase in military spending next year. According to this, the official defence budget is to rise to €50.1 billion. In addition, €8.4 billion will come from the so-called special fund of the Bundeswehr (Armed Forces). The increase will be finally approved when the budget bill is voted on by the full parliament.

With its increase in military spending, Germany's ruling class is launching the biggest rearmament offensive since the end of World War II. According to an official announcement by the Defence Ministry, the 2023 economic plan for the Bundeswehr special fund alone includes investments to procure the following items:

- F35 fighter aircraft
- CH-47 heavy transport helicopters
- Personal protective equipment for Bundeswehr soldiers
- Puma infantry fighting vehicles
- Frigate 126 (ships 1 to 4)

In addition, "funds for the procurement of ammunition will be increased by one billion euros" in the coming years. And all this is just the beginning. According to a report in the finance daily *Handelsblatt*, the German government plans to "replenish the Bundeswehr's

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stocks, which were depleted after the end of the Cold War” and to “spend ... up to around €20 billion.”

The German defence industry is already preparing to massively ramp up ammunition production. On Monday, defence contractor Rheinmetall announced the acquisition of Spanish rival Expal Systems for €1.2 billion. Expal Systems is one of the largest ammunition producers on the continent, with annual sales of €400 million.

According to Rheinmetall CEO Armin Papperger, the group’s capacities are sufficient to increase sales to €700 million and produce 250,000 to 300,000 artillery shells annually, including projectiles for the “Gepard” anti-aircraft tank. The German government has so far supplied 30 Gepards to Ukraine as part of NATO’s military support against Russia. However, the 6,000 rounds of anti-aircraft ammunition supplied are running out, and the manufacturing country, Switzerland, has not yet issued an export permit for further supplies.

The planned rearmament is a declaration of war in every respect. The costs will be passed on exclusively to the general population. While exploding energy prices and the highest inflation rate since the early 1950s are already plunging millions into poverty, the government is preparing massive social attacks. In the budget, for example, health spending alone is to be cut by more than €42 billion—and this in the midst of the still rampant coronavirus pandemic.

The ruling class is making no secret of the fact that the rearmament spending serves to escalate the war against Russia. On Monday, newsweekly *Der Spiegel* reported on a “confidential policy document” penned by Bundeswehr Inspector General Eberhard Zorn. According to the magazine, in a 68-page paper titled “Operational Guidelines for the Bundeswehr,” the highest-ranking German soldier orders that “the Bundeswehr must position itself more forcefully for a looming conflict with Russia.”

The sections *Spiegel* quotes from the document leave no doubt that the Bundeswehr is actively preparing for a direct war against the nuclear power Russia. “Attacks on Germany can potentially occur without warning and with major, possibly even existential, damaging effects,” Zorn warns. The Bundeswehr’s defence capability and operational readiness were “vital for survival” in this situation, it reads.

What Zorn then outlines is “nothing less than a mega-reform for the Bundeswehr.” According to the document, the “roughly three-decade-long focus on foreign missions” such as Afghanistan “no longer meets up to the current situation with its system-

threatening surprises.” Instead, “alliance defence, including the capability for visible and credible deterrence, must dominate Germany’s military action.”

The Bundeswehr is now clearly implementing war and rearmament plans that were already discussed in earlier documents, such as the Concept of the Bundeswehr or the Capability Profile. At the heart of this are two interrelated goals: Germany is working to organize Europe militarily under its leadership, in order to assert its imperialist interests internationally. This requires an army capable of waging full-scale war operations on its own.

“Since a direct conflict on NATO’s eastern flank has become ‘more likely again,’ Germany must take the lead in Europe and deploy its armed forces more robustly,” *Spiegel* comments on the Bundeswehr document. “Deployable armed forces oriented and trained for a high-intensity scenario” would form the backbone. “It is no longer enough to send smaller, specialized units on missions abroad. Instead, it says, large units must be kept ready for NATO to deploy and fight at any time.”

“Consequently, Germany would have to be prepared for the fact that the Bundeswehr would have to provide ‘responsive and combat-ready forces’ in the event of Russian aggression on NATO’s eastern border and could not wait for support from the United States. Neither the EU nor NATO could afford ‘to start planning and generating forces only after an attack has taken place.’ Specifically, Zorn said, the Bundeswehr must prepare itself ‘for an imposed war.’”

The fact that an official strategy paper of the German military again speaks of a war “imposed” by Russia underscores the sinister traditions being tapped into. The rhetoric echoes the propaganda the ruling class spread in the first half of the 20th century to justify its own aggression in two disastrous world wars.

After the German Reich (Empire) declared war on Russia on August 1, 1914, Kaiser Wilhelm II justified this in his speech opening the Reichstag (parliament) on August 4 before the assembled deputies with the fairy tale of the “imposed war.” He and his chancellor had “endeavoured, to the last moment,” to “avert the worst.” But now, “in imposed self-defence, with a pure conscience and a clean hand ... they took up the sword.” The Nazis, too, cynically sold their long-planned war of extermination in the East, in which some 30 million Soviet citizens fell victim, as a “defensive war.” It was “necessary to oppose this plot of the Jewish-Bolshevik instigators of war [...],” read a statement by Adolf Hitler, read out on the radio by Joseph Goebbels, then Minister of Propaganda,

immediately after the German invasion on June 22, 1941. “The task” was “to secure Europe and thus save everyone.”

The current war campaign stands in this tradition. The Russian invasion of Ukraine is reactionary, but the main aggressor is not Moscow, it is the imperialist powers. Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union by the Stalinist bureaucracy 30 years ago, the United States and its European allies have waged numerous wars of aggression in the Balkans, the Middle East, and North Africa. NATO has systematically encircled Russia, deliberately provoking the reactionary intervention of the Putin regime. Now, it is purposefully escalating the conflict further in order to subjugate the resource-rich country.



Soldiers from the German Armed Forces' 41st Mechanized Infantry Brigade take part in NATO's “Fast Griffin” exercise in Lithuania in October [AP Photo/Mindaugas Kulbis]

De facto, the NATO powers—led by Washington and Berlin—are already at war with Russia. They are arming Ukraine to the teeth, providing militarily relevant intelligence, and training and organizing the Ukrainian army on a large scale. On Monday, EU foreign ministers decided to release another €500 million for arms deliveries to Kiev and to train 15,000 Ukrainian soldiers—many of them in Germany.

Contrary to what the traffic light coalition government of Social Democrats (SPD), Liberal Democrats (FDP) and Greens wants to make believe, Germany is thus also a party to the war under international law. Just a few weeks after the war began, an expert report by the Bundestag's Scientific Service explicitly stated that training Ukrainian soldiers on German soil was tantamount to participating in the war.

At that time, Chancellor Olaf Scholz (SPD) had still warned of the danger of a third world war and of nuclear escalation. In an interview with *Spiegel* at the end of April, he stated

that everything must be done “to avoid a direct military confrontation between NATO and a highly armed superpower like Russia, a nuclear power.” He said it was a matter of “preventing an escalation that would lead to a third world war.”

Now, at every opportunity, Scholz stresses that Russia must be defeated militarily in Ukraine, and the German military is drafting strategy papers that prepare for just that: War against the nuclear power Russia. To prevent a catastrophe, a mass socialist movement of the working class against war must be built. This is the goal of the webinar that the IYSSE, the student and youth movement of the SGP and the Fourth International, is hosting on December 10. Register today!

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