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German defence minister calls for expansion of foreign military interventions

One week after the president of Germany's parliament, Wolfgang Schäuble, appealed for an expansion of foreign military interventions, Defence Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer has followed suit.

In a keynote address to what she referred to as “the up-and-coming leadership of our military” at the Bundeswehr University in Munich, Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer declared, “there is broad agreement that, given the strategic challenges, Germany must become more active” and “do more to defend our values and interests.”

Like Schäuble in his **Konrad Adenauer lecture**, Kramp-Karrenbauer dispensed with the usual humanitarian phrases used to justify wars. Instead, she sought to justify them with the strategic and economic interests of German imperialism.

“A country of our size, our technological and economic power, a country with our geostrategic location and global interests,” she said, “cannot just stand aside and watch, and wait for others to act ... We must make our own proposals, develop ideas, and present options. We Germans have a duty and above all an interest to intervene in these international debates and push them forward.”

The defence minister stressed that “assuming more responsibility ... means first of all that Germany must develop a standpoint on all of the strategic questions that affect its interests. Because like every other state in the world, Germany has its own strategic interests. For example, as a globally connected trading nation in the heart of Europe. We represent our interests every day. But we finally have to start admitting that.”

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“To put our standpoints and interests into practice,” continued Kramp-Karrenbauer, “we have to seize the initiative and take action.” This includes “calling our current security policy status quo into question” as well as the readiness to “exploit the full spectrum of our military means when necessary.”

For Kramp-Karrenbauer, the battlefields of future military operations stretch around the world. As examples, in addition to the current interventions in Afghanistan and Mali, she mentioned the Indo-Pacific region, “where our partners—above all Australia, Japan, and South Korea, but also India—increasingly feel threatened by China’s drive for more power.” It is time for Germany to “send a clear message of solidarity ... by showing a clear presence alongside our allies in the region,” she said.

The defence minister is prepared to send large numbers of soldiers to their death in order to realise her plans of imperialist militarism. “I know exactly how many of our soldiers were killed and injured in the ISAF operation [International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan],” she said.

Kramp-Karrenbauer was even more explicit in an extended interview she gave to the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* on the same topic. Responding to the remark that her plans would result in “more soldiers coming back in body bags,” she said, “every operation is dangerous,” before going on in the same sentence to call for an expansion of military operations in the Sahel region.

To organise future military interventions more effectively, the defence minister proposed the creation of a national security council, which would “ensure the reliable coordination of our strategic instruments,” bring together “diplomacy, the military, business and trade, internal security, and development aid,” and ensure “our international contributions to crisis management have a more rapid and effective impact.”

Kramp-Karrenbauer plans to significantly increase military spending to realise her proposals. “For the first time, we have broken through the €50 billion sound barrier for next year,” she enthused. “That is a major achievement. But it isn’t sufficient, because we need it to rise to 1.5 percent of GDP by 2024 and 2 percent by 2031 at the latest.” this corresponds to a sum of around €90 billion.

When Germany’s president and two government ministers announced the end of military restraint at the Munich Security Conference in February 2014, the *World Socialist Web Site* warned that the ruling elite was returning to its criminal militarist traditions. “German imperialism appears once again as it emerged historically. It is pushing into Eastern

Europe and the areas of the Former Soviet Union, and is reviving its colonialist policy in Africa,” we wrote at the time.

Kramp-Karrenbauer has now confirmed how correct that warning was. In her *Süddeutsche Zeitung* interview, she referred directly to the statements made at that time. “We reached a consensus at the Munich Security Conference in 2014,” she stated. “There, Joachim Gauck as German president, Frank-Walter Steinmeier as foreign minister, and Ursula von der Leyen as defence minister declared in unison: Germany must assume more responsibility.”

Since then, military spending has risen dramatically, German troops have been deployed to Russia’s borders, military operations have been expanded to Iraq, Syria and Mali, and the right-wing extremist Alternative for Germany has been established to impose the war policy in the face of widespread opposition in the population. Since 2017, the federal secret service has officially justified its surveillance of the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) due to its “advocacy of a democratic, egalitarian and socialist society” and its “agitation against so-called ‘imperialism’ and ‘militarism’.”

But for Kramp-Karrenbauer, this is far from enough. “We have not always managed to live up to the expectations we raised in Munich,” she continued. “At a time when the United States is in retreat, we are called upon to do more. Over recent years, we have often failed to be active enough.” Germany should not only intervene when it is asked, but must “take the initiative and provide an impulse” and be prepared “to bear the costs of that—financially, politically, and morally.”

The leader of the Christian Democrats (CDU) can be certain of the support of all parliamentary parties—from the AfD to the Left Party—which have all backed the return of German militarism. Only the SGP is resisting this dangerous development by arming workers and young people with a socialist and internationalist programme. A repetition of the crimes and catastrophes of the past can only be prevented through the building of an independent movement of the working class, which links the struggle against war with the fight against its root cause: the capitalist profit system.

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