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By Johannes Stern
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German government plans new military interventions, massive rearmament

The German army (*Bundeswehr*) is preparing for new military interventions. The plans were announced by the German defence minister, Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer (Christian Democratic Union, CDU), on Monday at a Bundeswehr base in Saarland. “We would be able to undertake additional missions today,” she boasted.

Concrete plans have been drawn up for a combat mission in Mali in West Africa. The German army is currently active there leading training missions, in the “actual fight against terrorism” which is, however, “currently being carried out exclusively by France.” There is “the desire by France to place the intervention on a broader basis,” because it is felt “that the situation is not easy with regard to the Malian and other armed forces ... This had to be discussed within the framework of the usual extension of mandates.”

The message is unequivocal: seven years after the Bundestag **decided** in early 2013 to support the French military intervention, the German mission is now officially to be transformed into a murderous combat operation. The task of the Bundeswehr is not to “fight against terrorism,” but rather to subject the country to neocolonial subjugation. Last week the German government’s “**Africa Conference**” in Berlin underlined the extent of Germany’s comprehensive imperialist plans for the heavily populated continent rich in resources.



German soldier in Afghanistan, August 2011 (Credit US Navy, Flickr)

The military and great power plans of the German government—a coalition of the CDU, Christian Social Union (CSU) and Social Democratic Party (SPD)—extend far beyond Africa. Kramp-Karrenbauer referred to her **foreign policy speech** at the Munich Armed Forces University two weeks ago, in which she called for a greater role in military and foreign policy for Germany, declaring that “We must be prepared that our allies and partners approach us much faster with such concerns.”

The Airborne Brigade 1, which is based in Saarlouis and totals around 4,100 troops, including all Bundeswehr paratroopers, is “proof that we are in a position to make such deployments,” the defence minister said. It is a “very special and agile unit,” which has been used repeatedly in the past to “go in quickly and react quickly where it matters on the ground.”

In order to put its war plans into action, the government plans to massively rearm the Bundeswehr and drive up military spending even more. In response to criticism by the German parliament’s commissioner for the army, Hans-Peter Bartels (SPD), that the army lacked equipment and personnel for major military tasks, Kramp-Karrenbauer replied: “We know we have to do more, but we are on the way.” In 2031 the German army would “realistically” be able to take over ten percent of NATO’s military capacity. Until that date at the latest, Germany would also reach the NATO target of two percent of gross domestic product for military spending.

In fact Germany will make substantial steps towards this goal as early as next year, as the pact to form the grand coalition laid out. According to a report by the German Press Agency, the German government has reported to the military alliance its intention to spend

50.25 billion euros [\$US55.3 billion] in 2020. “We are complying with our international obligations. The NATO defence rate is 1.42 percent,” boasted Social Democratic Finance Minister Olaf Scholz at yesterday’s presentation of the budget for 2020 in the Bundestag.

It is first and foremost the SPD that is leading the offensive in the grand coalition for a more independent foreign and great power policy for Germany. In an interview with Deutschlandfunk on Monday, former Social Democratic economics and foreign affairs minister and current chairman of the Atlantic Bridge, Sigmar Gabriel, stated that a “European defence policy” was “no illusion.” However, in contrast to the recent proposal by French President Emmanuel Macron, he would “not organise it in opposition to NATO, but rather as a supplement.”

“What Macron is doing [...] when he declares NATO is finished,” carries “the danger” that Eastern European countries “may bind themselves even closer to the US, and that splits Europe rather than unites it,” Gabriel warned. East Europeans would “not trust the security policy of the Europeans.” His “advice” therefore, is: “Of course, expand Europe’s defence capacity, but not in opposition to NATO.”

In order to organise Europe under German leadership, Gabriel argues that the rearming of the Bundeswehr should be increased above and beyond the parameters agreed within the context of NATO’s military rearmament directed against Russia.

“If you talk about two percent for the defence budget, two percent of gross domestic product, you can imagine saying that in Germany we are investing 1.5 percent in the German army and 0.5 percent in the NATO fund to defend Eastern Europe.” He went on: “This would show our neighbours in Poland and the Baltic countries that we are prepared to assume responsibility for their security on a larger scale, something only the US has done up to now.” It was “somewhat Germany’s fate. We are the central power in Europe. We are the strongest country, the strongest economy.”

Five years after the German government announced the end of military restraint at the Munich Security Conference in 2014, the ruling class can no longer hide the fact that it is basing its foreign and great power politics on the militaristic traditions of the German Empire and the Nazis. In his major **lecture on foreign policy** at the end of October, the president of the German parliament, Wolfgang Schäuble (CDU), described 1945, i.e., the date of the downfall of the Third Reich and the defeat of Germany in World War II—as a “catastrophe.”