

Germany's top military brass: Prepare for war with Russia in "five to eight" years

Peter Schwarz
14 February 2024

At the end of January, Defence Minister Boris Pistorius (Social Democrat, SPD) stated in several interviews that Germany must prepare for a direct military confrontation with Russia. Now the highest-ranking German military brass, Inspector General Carsten Breuer, has clarified these statements in a detailed interview.

"If I follow the analysts and see the military threat potential posed by Russia, then that means five to eight years of preparation time for us," he told *Welt am Sonntag*. "That doesn't mean there will be war. But it is possible. And because I'm a military man, I say: in five years we have to be ready for war."

By "ready for war," Breuer means not only a massive rearmament of the military but also a comprehensive militarisation of society. When asked what "the difference is to defence capability," he replied: "There is much more to war capability. In addition to personnel and material readiness, it is also about the necessary change in mentality that we need to undergo. We need a change of mindset, both in society and, above all, in the Bundeswehr [Armed Forces]."

When asked about the introduction of conscription, Breuer replied that he was striving for a solution "that meets military needs. And for me, this military need is first and foremost to ensure that the armed forces are able to grow so that we can hold our own in a war."

Breuer is a highly political general with close ties to the government apparatus. He has held commands in various military units, in Kosovo and Afghanistan and has worked at the NATO headquarters and several times at the Federal Ministry of Defence.

In 2015, the then Defence Minister Ursula von der Leyen (Christian Democrat, CDU) appointed him as the commissioner for the "White Paper 2016," which serves as a guide for security policy decisions. The White Paper focussed on the deployment against Russia in Eastern Europe, the deployment of the Bundeswehr within Germany and massive rearmament. In 2021, Chancellor Angela Merkel (CDU) appointed Breuer as Head of the Coronavirus

Crisis Staff in the Federal Chancellery. He has been Inspector General of the Bundeswehr since March 2023.

Breuer's call for war is accompanied by a war hysteria fuelled by all parties in the Bundestag (federal parliament), the media, various think tanks and the trade unions. The demands range from a further increase in the defence budget to the reintroduction of compulsory military service and the creation of a German or European nuclear force.

On Monday, in front of television cameras, Chancellor Olaf Scholz (SPD) took part in the ground-breaking ceremony for an expansion of the Rheinmetall munitions factory in Unterlüss, Lower Saxony. Armin Pappberger, head of Germany's second-largest arms manufacturer, boasted that Rheinmetall would produce up to 700,000 artillery shells per year in 2025, "a sufficient quantity to supply Europe." His company plans to increase sales to €10 billion this year, €15 billion in two years and over €20 billion in seven to eight years. Germany would then account for 40 percent of global turnover instead of 20.

The media have eagerly seized on the blocking of funds for the Ukraine war by the US Republicans and disparaging remarks by Presidential candidate Donald Trump about NATO, to call for European nuclear weapons.

On Monday, the editor of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, Berthold Kohler, published an attack on the German government from the right. "It seems that the federal coalition government doesn't even want to start thinking about an alternative nuclear deterrent because it fears that the last taboo of German security policy would have to be dropped in the end: renouncing having its own nuclear weapons."

For the IG Metall union, which long ago passed resolutions against war and armament at its congresses, this does not go far enough. On Friday, the union, the Federal Association of the German Security and Defence Industry (BDSV) and the SPD's Economic Forum published a joint letter to Defence Minister Pistorius and Economics Minister Habeck (Liberal Democrats, FDP) calling for an industrial policy concept to strengthen the German arms industry.

The joint paper calls for Germany's own defence capabilities in the land, air, and sea dimensions to be further developed and, if necessary, new ones to be established in order to secure the performance of the defence industry and increase its development and production capabilities. The production capacities and technological capabilities of Germany and the defence companies operating here must be promoted. This was necessary in order to strengthen Germany, its industry and the jobs there, as well as the capabilities and sovereignty of the Bundeswehr, the paper asserts.

This confirms what was already evident in the First World War: In times of war, the chauvinistic trade union bureaucrats become the worst warmongers, who will not shy away from any outrageous act.

The war hysteria in ruling circles must be taken seriously. They are able and willing to lead Germany into a third war against Russia after the two world wars, even if it means risking the nuclear devastation of large parts of Europe.

The claim that they are only concerned with defence and deterrence is a brazen lie designed to cover up their pro-war intentions. The Putin regime, which represents the interests of the Russian oligarchs who plundered the social property of the Soviet Union, is politically reactionary. But it is not pursuing imperialist plans of conquest. On the contrary, it has always endeavoured to come to terms with the Western powers. Putin was therefore enthusiastically celebrated in the German Bundestag in 2001, where he gave a speech in German.

But the imperialist powers were not satisfied with coming to an arrangement. They wanted to have everything and subject the former Soviet Union completely to their economic control. The Putin regime accepted the fact that contrary to original agreements, NATO took in the whole of Eastern Europe—including the former Baltic Soviet republics. But when NATO extended its arms into Ukraine and Georgia and undertook violent actions in Iraq, Libya and Syria against regimes with which Russia had close economic and political ties, nationalist forces gained the upper hand in Moscow.

The coup of February 2014, in which the US, Germany, France and Poland helped a pro-Western regime come to power in Kiev with the help of fascist forces, was the last straw. Russia responded by taking over the predominantly Russian-populated Crimea, its most important access to the Black Sea. NATO used the Minsk Agreement brokered by Germany and France to buy time and arm Ukraine, while fascist militias such as the Azov Battalion kept the conflict in eastern Ukraine on the boil.

Russia's military attack on Ukraine was ultimately a reactionary and desperate attempt to put pressure on NATO.

A negotiated solution would have been possible if NATO had refrained from further expansion, which Moscow perceived as an existential threat. Even high-ranking experts recognise this.

Harald Kujat, Inspector General of the German Armed Forces from 2000 to 2002 and Chairman of the NATO Military Committee from 2002 to 2005, recently said in an interview that he "assumes that the attack on Ukraine is not part of an imperial plan to reconquer the former Soviet sphere of influence or, beyond that, the whole of Europe. Moscow is clearly more concerned with preventing the expansion of NATO, through Ukraine's membership, right up to the Russian border."

However, the German government and NATO do not want a negotiated solution, but war until Russia is defeated. Ukraine serves them as a means to an end. They are not only financing the Ukrainian army, but also the Ukrainian state budget. With \$30 billion to date, Germany is the second largest donor after the US. Although up to half a million soldiers have been killed or seriously injured on both sides so far, the German government continues to categorically rule out any negotiated solution.

At the same time, the NATO powers have opened a second front in the Middle East, where the German government unconditionally supports the Israeli genocide against the Palestinians in Gaza. Opposition leader Friedrich Merz (CDU) has even travelled to Israel specifically to support the Netanyahu regime in its attack on Rafah, where over a million refugees are at its mercy.

The reason for this madness is the hopeless crisis of the capitalist system. As in the First and Second World Wars, the imperialist powers are responding by fighting to redivide the world and suppress the working class at home. Germany, which occupied Ukraine in both world wars, is following its traditional expansionist course.

There is only one way to stop the danger of war. The mobilisation and unification of the international working class on the basis of a socialist programme. The struggle against war must be united with the resistance against exploitation and social inequality and directed against the capitalist system. This is what the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party) and the Fourth International stand for.



To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)