

# German government plans to introduce conscription: Cannon fodder for the great “land war”

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The past few weeks have been characterised by a breathtaking escalation of the NATO proxy war against Russia in Ukraine. Hardly a day has gone by without leading politicians urging tougher action against Russia. While the Ukrainian army has attacked targets in the Russian hinterland with NATO weapons and the military alliance discussed the deployment of ground troops, the German government is vigorously pressing ahead with its preparations for a major European “land war”—as the self-proclaimed “defence industry minister” Robert Habeck (Greens) calls it.

The government is accelerating its plans for a new compulsory military service, which Defence Minister Boris Pistorius (Social Democrats, SPD) partially presented to the public last week. In the spring, Pistorius had already called for a return to compulsory military service based on the Scandinavian model in order to make Germany “fit for war.”

Last Wednesday, Pistorius then announced to the assembled press that at least 5,000 additional young men and women would be called up for “selective military service” every year from 2025. This was the maximum possible within the limits of current training capacities.

“I make no secret of it: I would like to train 20,000 conscripts every year,” said the minister. With the expansion of capacities, the number should then increase. “Three issues are central to this: personnel, material and finances. In an emergency, we need young men and women to defend this country.”

The main purpose of Pistorius’ immediate plans lies less in an immediate mobilisation than in creating the structures—registration of persons, corresponding laws, etc.—to eventually be able to call up hundreds of thousands of soldiers and reservists as cannon fodder.

According to Pistorius, the first step should be to reintroduce conscription. Since this currently exists, “Neither for those who turn 18 and would have to be drafted

if we were to get into a defence situation, nor for those who have already served and are now living their lives as 40- or 45-year-old fathers,” this was an “untenable situation,” the minister said.

The current conscription plans centre on sending a questionnaire to all 18-year-old men and women, in which they are asked to provide information about their physical condition and interest in military service. The approximately 400,000 men affected each year are obliged to complete the questionnaire. If they fail to do so, they face a fine.

The selection on the basis of the questionnaire means 40,000 to 50,000 young people will then be required to take part in the draft. At the end, “We will have a precise idea of which young men and women are particularly suitable and motivated to serve our country,” explained Pistorius.

Contrary to what numerous press reports suggest—such as *Der Spiegel*, under the headline “Just a bit of duty”—the government’s plan is by no means based solely on the “willingness to volunteer” of young people. Not least because of the massive recruitment problems of recent decades, the government and the Bundeswehr (Armed Forces) know that the aversion to the military among young people is still overwhelming.

If 5,000 volunteers were not recruited, Pistorius expressly stated it would be necessary to compulsorily enlist them. Conscription itself should be reinstated and a corresponding draft law prepared by the autumn, he said.

In addition, the number of reservists who are called up in the event of war should be more than tripled—from 60,000 to 200,000. To this end, conscripts should be called up to the reserve after their active service and train annually with active troops and other reservists.

In addition, he would like to see general compulsory service. The model now being presented was “a starting point,” said the minister, adding, “This does not rule out anything for the future.”

The scale of conscription that Pistorius and his ministry

have in mind is revealed in a confidential internal paper quoted by *Der Spiegel* on June 7. According to this, the Bundeswehr would need around 465,000 soldiers in a “real case of defence”—meaning a war against Russia. According to the same internal paper, a further 75,000 German soldiers are required just to fulfil the defence plans already agreed by NATO.

### “Overall defence framework guidelines” (RRGV)

The mobilisation of hundreds of thousands of young people in Germany for a war against Russia would require a dictatorship. The government may be able to muster 5,000 volunteers a year, but not 500,000 without draconian coercive measures.

The enormity of the government’s plans for the militarisation of the country can be seen from the “Framework Guidelines for Overall Defence” (RRGV), which were approved by the cabinet just one week before the new military service plans were announced and represent a kind of abridged version of the secret 1,000-page “Operation Plan Germany.”

This transfers the requirements of the defence policy guidelines adopted last November to society as a whole. As the WSWS commented in November, these guidelines “can only be described as a blueprint for total war.”

The RRGV now show that this assessment was by no means exaggerated. In the event of war, the whole of society is to be organised according to military requirements. Moreover, the government is obviously prepared to accept massive numbers of casualties.

For example, the guidelines only provide for “basic protection against the effects of weapons of war,” which results from the “solid building fabric available everywhere”—i.e., simple, often dilapidated residential buildings. Otherwise, underground car parks and underground stations would serve as improvised bunkers. The majority of the population would therefore be practically defenceless against massive air or artillery attacks—not to mention nuclear weapons—especially as the “usual attack scenarios” are based on “extremely short warning times.”

The extent of war devastation that the government expects from 2029 onwards also becomes clear. “Due to the possibility of damage occurring simultaneously in a large number of locations,” the paper states, people cannot expect the state to help them. As in the last two world wars, which devastated an entire generation, they must therefore be

prepared to “help themselves first ... and also provide neighbourly help.”

In addition, the guidelines contain massive cuts to basic rights, such as “bans on leaving and entering.”

According to a report in *Der Spiegel*, the much more comprehensive “Operation Plan Germany” also deals with questions such as “whether there are enough train drivers and strikebreakers on the railway” to ensure the transport of war equipment and cannon fodder to the front. “Must an addendum be added in small print to the train drivers’ collective labour agreements: ‘In the event of war, you will drive our trains’?”

These last points in particular show that the government’s war plans are taking on the character of a conspiracy against the majority of the population. Whether at home or in the direct combat zone, they will be on the front line and are expected to sacrifice their lives and rights for the government’s great power plans and the corporate interests it represents. At the same time, those in power take great care to ensure that these facts only reach the public in fragments or not at all.

These plans are flanked by non-stop war propaganda. Four days before the European elections, in which the government parties were downright decimated, Defence Minister Boris Pistorius demanded in the Bundestag (parliament): “We must be ready for war by 2029”—thus substantiating his already well-known demand.

Last Wednesday, the minister continued, “According to all international military experts, we must assume that Russia will be in a position ... to attack a NATO state or a neighbouring state from 2029.”

Once again, the war in Ukraine serves as justification for imperialist war plans that have been in the pipeline for at least 10 years. On June 5, the minister declared in the Bundestag: “We must not believe that Putin will stop at Ukraine’s borders.” Russia was also a threat to Georgia, Moldova and NATO as a whole, he said, but did not provide any proof of this.

According to *Der Spiegel*, the Ministry of Defence has chosen the slogan “The best year of my life” for its efforts to recruit young people as cannon fodder for the interests of German capitalism. “The last year of my life” would be more honest.



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