

Berlin supports US-British missile plans against Russia

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The German government has announced its support for the US and British plans to allow Kiev to deploy NATO missiles for direct attacks on Russia. At a joint press conference with his Lithuanian counterpart Lurynas Kasčiūnas last Friday, Defence Minister Boris Pistorius (Social Democrat, SPD) claimed that the use of long-range NATO weapons against targets on Russian territory was covered by international law.

“Those who supplied these weapons” were free to “decide to do so,” he said, referring to US-British plans to attack targets in Russia’s heartland with missiles and cruise missiles such as the ATACMS and Storm Shadow. “Under international law, that’s perfectly fine, and what bilateral partners agree with each other about what happens to their weapons is their business.”

Pistorius dismissed the Russian threat to launch a massive counterattack, including the use of nuclear weapons, in the event of a full-scale attack on Russia, saying, “Putin’s threats are Putin’s threats. There’s nothing more to say. He threatens whenever he wants and entices whenever he sees fit.”

Other representatives of the governing and opposition parties made similar statements. Marie-Agnes Strack-Zimmermann (Liberal Democratic Party, FDP), chair of the European Parliament’s defence committee, told rbb inforadio: “Everyone knows, we know, it’s no secret from which bases Vladimir Putin launches his missiles, his cruise missiles. And it is in line with the law that these be disabled.”

Christian Democratic Union (CDU) foreign policy expert Norbert Röttgen described the Russian threats as “absurd” in a comment on X (formerly Twitter). Supporting Ukraine was “in line with international law” and served “to restore peace in Europe. This also applies to military targets on Russian territory.”

Pistorius and Co. should explain the consequences of their policies. How many millions of lives are they willing to sacrifice for their war aims? It is clear that the discussed missile attacks on Russia would mean an escalation of the

war that would bring about the use of nuclear weapons.

Even before the meeting between US President Joe Biden and British Prime Minister Keir Starmer last week, Putin had warned that the use of NATO weapons against Russia would make the military alliance a party to the war. “If this decision is made, it will mean nothing less than the direct involvement of NATO countries, the United States and European states in the conflict in Ukraine,” Putin said. “Their direct involvement, of course, significantly changes the whole essence, the whole nature of the conflict.”

On the weekend, the deputy head of the Security Council of the Russian Federation, Dmitry Medvedev, explained the far-reaching significance of Putin’s statements. The Russian president had set out the “formal conditions” for a decision on the use of nuclear weapons. Such a decision “would be in line with our doctrine of nuclear deterrence”. Medvedev warned that “a nuclear response is an extremely difficult decision with irreversible consequences”. But NATO’s current position carries the risk of turning Kiev into a “huge grey melting spot”.

The official narrative that Russia’s military doctrine is a “bluff” is playing with nuclear fire. Just because the Kremlin has not yet responded to the increasingly aggressive NATO provocations does not mean that it will not do so in the future. This is even recognised by the bellicose bourgeois media. A *Die Welt* commentary titled “It becomes dangerous when a nuclear power is cornered” warns:

It would be negligent to interpret the absence of a Russian nuclear weapons attack as proof that Russia’s threats are not to be taken seriously. As long as Russia does not see itself confronted with an existential challenge, things will presumably remain as they are.

But if Western policy goes beyond ensuring Ukraine’s survival, as many commentators demand, and seeks to defeat Russia, Moscow’s nuclear threats would take on a whole new dimension.

This is the situation. The declared goal of the NATO powers is to inflict a “strategic defeat” on Russia in Ukraine. “A relentless military logic is at work here,” we wrote in a recent statement by the WSWs editorial board. “The NATO powers are responding to a situation in which their Ukrainian proxy force has been exhausted and is facing a military debacle. Only through greater and more direct intervention by NATO can the entire project of the war be salvaged.”

All the assurances given by German Chancellor Olaf Scholz (SPD), which he repeated at a public meeting in Prenzlau, Brandenburg, at the weekend, that he would not deliver any of Germany’s Taurus cruise missiles to Kiev cannot hide the fact that Berlin is also playing a central role in the current escalation of the war. Significantly, Major General Christian Freuding, head of the Ukraine Special Staff in the Ministry of Defence, has been in Ukraine in the past few days.

In an interview with the German news programme *heute journal*, the general not only praised the invasion of the Ukrainian army into the Russian Kursk region, but also the use of long-range weapons against Russia. These were “of course very well suited against headquarters, against logistical hubs, but also against airfields” and “against concentrations of aircraft”. It was “a particular problem for Ukraine on the front line” to be hit by Russian cruise missiles; and “the only way to ward off this danger” was to attack their “aircraft and airfields”.

Freuding’s regular presence in Kiev, where he appears in full uniform, and his remarks underscore how directly the Bundeswehr (Armed Forces) are already involved in the war in Ukraine. “We are training the Ukrainians very intensively here in Germany,” Freuding boasted. And one could see “in the training how much we benefit from the insights of Ukrainian soldiers.” These “experiences” must now “also be integrated into our own armed forces, made accessible, and our lessons and conclusions drawn from them.”

This is a warning. The “experience” of hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian soldiers is to be used as cannon fodder for imperialist interests. A similar fate threatens workers and youth in Germany and other NATO states. Earlier this year, Pistorius stated in several interviews that Germany must be prepared to wage direct war against Russia in the “next three to five years”. Since then, the Bundeswehr has been geared towards this.

The focus of the meeting between Pistorius and Kas?i?nas was the signing of a joint agreement for the permanent deployment of around 5,000 German combat troops in Lithuania. “Our goal, on which we are all working together and with great urgency, is and remains the deployment of a deployable German brigade in Lithuania by the end of

2027,” Pistorius announced.

According to a report by the Ministry of Defence, the advance party of the German brigade has been in Lithuania’s capital Vilnius since April. The future brigade commander will travel to Lithuania in September, and “the build-up to the formation staff of around 150 people” will take place in October and November. As early as next year, “the first forces of the brigade will be stationed until the target infrastructure is completed”. The “formation roll call of the brigade” is planned for the first half of 2025.

The offensive of German militarism in Eastern Europe against Russia is part of a dreadful tradition. In the Second World War, the Wehrmacht, Hitler’s army, waged a war of extermination in the East, which reached its horrific climax in the Holocaust of six million Jews and the murder of 30 million Soviet citizens.

As in those days, the madness of war has objective causes. Once again, German imperialism is pursuing concrete geopolitical and economic goals. Scholz openly stated this on his current trip to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. “Central Asia is becoming increasingly important – both from a geopolitical point of view and with regard to our supply of raw materials,” he wrote on X.

And as in the 1930s, the response of the ruling class to the deep crisis of the capitalist profit system and the growing opposition among workers and youth is an aggressive turn to militarism, fascism and war. The only way to stop this dangerous development is to build an independent anti-war movement of the international working class based on a socialist programme.



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