

Multibillion Weapons Exports: Germany Arms the Persian Gulf Monarchies

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In the past year, Germany has more than doubled its arms exports to the Arab Gulf monarchies. Algeria, too, received more defense materiel than in 2011. This emerges from a response by the ministry of economics to a parliamentary question of the Left Party, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* reported last week.

In 2012, arms exports valued at €1.42 billion were approved for the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council. In the previous year, these exports were just €570 million. At €1.24 billion, the largest share went to Saudi Arabia, nine times as much as the year before. Export permits for Bahrain and Qatar rose to €4.3 and €17.6 million, respectively.

As for arms exports to Algeria, in 2010 they were around €20 million, while in 2011 they had risen to €217 million, and in 2012 to €287 million.

According to the economics ministry, these figures are based upon a “preliminary” analysis of arms exports permits issued in 2012. Definitive figures will be published towards the end of the year in the government’s arms export report. They are expected to be far higher.

At the end of last year, it was revealed that Saudi Arabia had officially requested the purchase of hundreds of “Boxer” armoured transport vehicles and 30 “Dingo” armoured reconnaissance vehicles from Germany. More recently, the German media reported that the Saudi monarchy was also seeking to buy German patrol boats worth €1.5 billion. In 2011, it was revealed that Germany had supplied 200 “Leopard 2” tanks to Saudi Arabia.

The massive stepping-up of arms supplies to the Gulf States by Germany reflects the geo-strategic interests of German imperialism, which is increasingly acting with military aggression to satisfy its hunger for raw materials and to impose its own interests against those of its rivals.

Last week, the financial daily *Handelsblatt* published an article headlined “Expedition raw materials: Germany’s new course”, which laid out German imperialism’s new doctrine. The article states that German industry and government agree that the “securing of raw materials” is a “strategic theme for German foreign policy”. Securing them must also involve the use of “instruments of security and military policy”, the paper wrote. *Handelsblatt* placed the arms sales to Saudi Arabia, which has the world’s largest oil reserves, in this context. “In the view of Chancellor Angela Merkel, German interests are already being secured through arms exports to strategically important regions such as the oil state of Saudi Arabia”, it wrote. “The controversial export of ‘Leopard 2’ and ‘Boxer’ tanks, as well as patrol boats, to Saudi Arabia should also be seen against this background. According to the ‘Merkel doctrine’, Germany’s ‘strategic partners’ should be supported not

only politically but also by force of arms—before being compelled in a crisis to send one’s own soldiers.”

Defence Minister Thomas de Maizière, who is restructuring the German army into a global fighting force, describes this doctrine cynically as “strengthening instead of intervening.” In an interview with news weekly Der Spiegel last November, he said that it was a matter of “strengthening the security forces, including through military equipment, in weak countries with halfway decent governments, so that they can take security into their own hands.”

What de Maizière means is the suppression of protests by governments that the German bourgeoisie regards as central for the defence of its strategic interests. The Gulf States are not only an important source of raw materials for Germany; they also play a key role in containing revolutionary struggles in the Arab world, which began with the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt, and in defending imperialist interests in the region.

The semi-feudal al-Saud monarchy, under which executions and torture are an almost daily occurrence, suppresses all protests against their dictatorial rule by police violence. The al-Khalifa regime in Bahrain has employed extreme brutality in dealing with mass protests over the last two years. Qatar first supported the NATO bombing campaign against Libya and is now playing a key role organizing the war against the Syrian regime of Bashar al-Assad, waged by the West.

The Gulf States also play a key role in the preparations for war against Iran. The Gulf Cooperation Council—Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman and the United Arab Emirates—was founded in 1981 as a direct response to the Iranian revolution. In recent years, the Gulf States have been continually provided with the latest military technology as part of the Western powers’ preparations for war against Iran.

The German government justifies its arms sales to Saudi Arab directly with the preparations for war against Iran. In an interview with the news program Tagesthemen, when Chancellor Merkel was asked about German defense exports to Saudi Arabia, she declared that Germany enjoyed a “strategic partnership” with some of the Gulf States, since the Iranian nuclear program was regarded as a “very serious threat”.

A war against Iran would not only trigger a conflagration throughout the region, but risks armed conflict with Russia and China, who support Tehran. This testifies to the dangers of a third World War.

The resurgence of German militarism, which in the last century plunged humanity into two world wars, is opposed by broad layers of the German population. Against this backdrop, the opposition parties are trying to distance themselves from the unpopular arms exports.

The Social Democratic Party candidate for chancellor in this year’s federal elections, Peer Steinbrück, claims an “SPD-Green Party government under my leadership would turn off arms exports”.

This is pure hypocrisy. The last SPD-Green Party government of Chancellor Gerhard Schröder (SPD) and Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer (Greens) not only supported the bloody colonial wars in Kosovo and Afghanistan. Like the Merkel government, it exported weapons to the Middle East, including hundreds of “Leopard” battle tanks to Turkey, 1,200 anti-tank weapons to Saudi Arabia and submarines to Israel.

Nothing has changed regarding the SPD and the Green's fundamental support for war. Only last week, they voted with the government parties for the deployment of 330 German troops to Mali to support the French invasion.

The Left Party's criticism of arms exports is an equally mendacious attempt to divert attention from their own role supporting Germany's war policy.

Like all the other parties of the German bourgeoisie, the Left Party has supported the murderous war against Syria, where over the last two years pro-Western militias have organized a terrorist war to overthrow the regime of Bashar al-Assad and to install a pro-Western puppet government. Late last year, leaders of the Left Party signed a statement together with politicians from the Christian Democrats, the SPD and Greens in support of war against Syria. The Syrian opposition forces supported by the Left Party are mainly funded and armed by the Gulf States.

The collaboration of all the parties in the Bundestag (federal parliament) with the Gulf States, or with forces supported by them, is a warning to the working class. As soon as mass protests against war and austerity break out in Germany, the ruling class will suppress them with the same brutality employed by the Gulf monarchies, which they have armed to the teeth.

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