

1.4.6 SUSPENSION OF COMPULSORY MILITARY

SUSPENSION OF COMPULSORY MILITARY SERVICE GIVEN THE GREEN LIGHT BY THE GERMAN BUNDESTAG

German Federal Ministry of Defense
Berlin, 24.03.2011.

July 2011 will be a turning point in history: This is the day on which the German Bundestag has decided that compulsory military service will be officially suspended. On 24 March, the parliamentarians adopted the draft act by a large majority.

The Act Amending Military Law suspends conscription for basic military service as from 1 July and, at the same time, introduces voluntary military service. "Both are key elements on the way to realigning the Bundeswehr," said Federal Minister of Defense Thomas de Maizière in a speech in the German Bundestag.

The Minister stated that Germany needed armed forces that were modern, efficient, effective, globally respected, anchored in the alliance and financially sustainable. In addition, they had to be adequately prepared and flexible and capable of adapting to new challenges. In order to achieve this goal, Germany did not need a large number of military personnel, but a highly professional force.

No cause for rejoicing

"Our suspension of compulsory military service gives me no cause for rejoicing today. It is a necessary step, but not one that makes me happy," said de Maizière. However, he said that there was no turning back now: "Firstly, the security situation does not justify a conscript army any longer; secondly, it is not a military necessity any longer; and thirdly, comprehensive equity in conscription would not be guaranteed any longer."

Financial incentives are not everything

The Minister advocated that women in particular should be recruited for the armed forces. "Those who render voluntary military service must be better off than those who don't," the Minister went on to explain.

The best and most capable people would have to be recruited for this new voluntary service. "Those who join the Bundeswehr purely for financial reasons may be just the ones we do not want around," he emphasized.

"Soldiers must be assured that serving in the Bundeswehr is regarded as and respected for what it is: serving our society and serving our country honorably – a service they and our country are proud of."

Evaluation to take place after a year

The Minister said he was not going to be party to speculations on how many volunteers would actually join the Bundeswehr in July. "I welcome everyone who decides to enlist." At the same time, he announced that he was going to have the Act Amending Military Law evaluated with respect to its feasibility and social acceptance after a year.

The adoption of the Act Amending Military Law would abolish neither the constitutional nor the non-constitutional basis of compulsory military service as a whole. De Maizière said that this would also serve as a safeguard against potential changes in the security environment in the future.

Further decisions to be taken by June

The Minister promised that decisions as to the further implementation of the Bundeswehr reform would be taken by June. They concerned the number of military personnel, the capability profile and the Bundeswehr's rough organizational structures as well as the Ministry and the civilian defense administration.

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