

Full Transcript of German Top Military Officials' Leaked Plot to Attack Crimean Bridge

Yesterday (Updated: Yesterday)

<https://sputnikglobe.com/20240301/full-transcript-of-german-top-military-officials-leaked-plot-to-attack-crimean-bridge-1117078481.html>

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On February 19, 2024, a conversation took place among Grafe (department head for operations and exercises at the Air Force Forces Command of the Bundeswehr), Gerhartz (Bundeswehr Air Force Inspector), Fenske and Frohstedte (employees of the Air Operations Command within the Space Operations Center of the Bundeswehr).

Earlier in the day, Margarita Simonyan, editor-in-chief of RT and Rossiya Segodnya, Sputnik's parent media group, [published the text](#) of a conversation among high-ranking Bundeswehr representatives discussing the attack on the Crimean Bridge with Taurus missiles and other issues. Full audio [is here](#) and full transcript is below.

Gerhartz: Greetings, everyone! Grafe, are you currently in Singapore?

Grafe: Yes.

Gerhartz: Good. We need to verify the information. As you've probably heard, Defense Minister Pistorius intends to carefully consider the issue of supplying Taurus missiles to Ukraine. We have a meeting scheduled with him. We need to discuss everything so that we can start working on it. So far, I don't see any indication of when these deliveries will start. The Chancellor never told him, "I want the information now, and tomorrow morning we'll make the decision." I haven't heard anything like that. On the contrary, Pistorius is evaluating all this ongoing discussion. Nobody knows why the Federal Chancellor is blocking these deliveries. Of course, the most incredible rumors are going around. For example, yesterday a journalist, who is very close to the Chancellor, called me. She heard somewhere in Munich that the Taurus missiles would not work. I asked her who told her that. She replied that someone in a military uniform did. Of course, this is a low-level source of information, but the journalist clung to these words and now wants to make it into a piece of news with a headline like: "Now we know why the Chancellor refuses to send Taurus missiles – they won't work." All this is nonsense. Such topics are only available to a limited circle of people. However, we see what kind of garbage is spreading in the meantime. I want to coordinate this issue with you so that we don't move in the wrong direction. Firstly, I have some questions for Frohstedte and Fenske. Has anyone spoken to you about this? Did Freyding approach you?

Frohstedte: No. I only spoke to Grafe.

Fenske: Same here, I only spoke to Grafe.

Gerhartz: He might reach out to you later. I might have to participate in budget committee hearings because there are issues related to the escalating costs of upgrading the F-35 in Büchel. I have already passed my recommendations through Frank that we have slides to visualize the material. We showed him a draft presentation where Taurus missiles were mounted on a Tornado carrier or other carrier required by the mission. However, I can hardly imagine that. Remember, it's a half-hour meeting, so don't prepare a 30-slide presentation. The report should be brief. We need to show what the missile can do and how it can be used. We need to consider the consequences if we make a political decision to transfer missiles as aid to Ukraine. I would appreciate it if you could inform me not only about the problems we have, but also on how we can solve them. For example, if we're talking about delivery methods... I know how the English do it. They always transport them on Ridgback armored vehicles. They have several people on-site. The French don't do it that way. They deliver Q7s to Ukraine with Scalp missiles. Storm Shadows and Scalps have similar technical specifications for their installation. How are we going to solve this problem? Are we going to transfer MBDA missiles to them using Ridgbacks? Will one of our people be posted to MBDA? Grafe, report to us on our position on this issue. Fenske and Frohstedte, Gentlemen, report on how you see the situation.

Grafe: I'll start with the most sensitive issues, with the existing criticism regarding the deliveries. Discussions are taking place almost everywhere. There are several key aspects here. Firstly, it's about the delivery timelines. If the Chancellor decides now that we should deliver missiles, they will be transferred from the Bundeswehr. Fine, but they will only be ready for use in eight months. Secondly, we cannot shorten the time. Because if we do, there might be an error in its use, the missile might hit a kindergarten, and there will be civilian casualties again. These aspects need to be considered. It must be noted in the negotiations that without the manufacturer, we cannot do anything. They can equip, rearm, and deliver the initial missiles. We can speed up production a bit, but we shouldn't wait until 20 units have accumulated. We can deliver them in batches of five. The delivery time of these missiles directly depends on the industry. Who will pay for this? Another question to consider is which weapon systems will these missiles be mounted on? And, how should the interaction between the company and Ukraine be maintained? Is there already some form of integration established?

Gerhartz: I don't think so. Because the manufacturer, TSG, stated that, they can solve this problem within six months, whether it's a Sukhoi aircraft or an F-16.

Grafe: If the Federal Chancellor decides to go for this, there must be an understanding that it will take six months just for the production of mounts. Thirdly, theoretically, the question of training may concern us. I've already mentioned that we cooperate with the missile manufacturer. They handle the maintenance training, and we handle the tactical application. This takes about three to four months. This part of the training can take place in Germany. When delivering the initial missiles, we need to make quick decisions regarding the mounts and training. We may have to turn to the British for these matters and use their know-how. We can provide them with databases, satellite images, and planning stations. Apart from the delivery of the missiles themselves, which we have, everything else can be provided by the industry or the IABG.

Gerhartz: We need to consider that they can use aircraft with mounts for both Taurus and Storm Shadow missiles. The British have been there and outfitted aircraft. There is not much difference between the systems, they can be used for Taurus as well. I can talk about the experience of using the Patriot system. Our experts initially also tallied up long timeframes, but they managed to do it within a few weeks. They managed to get everything up and running so quickly and in so much quantity that our staff said, "Wow. We didn't expect that." We are currently fighting a war that uses much more modern technology than our good old Luftwaffe. This all suggests that when we plan deadlines, we shouldn't go overboard with them. And now, Fenske and Frohstedte, Gentlemen, I would like to hear your opinion on possible deliveries to Ukraine.

Fenske: I would like to focus on the question of training. We have already looked into this, and if we deal with personnel who already have relevant training and will undergo training concurrently, it would only take approximately three weeks for them to become familiar with the equipment and then proceed directly to Air Force training, which would last about four weeks. Thus, it is much less than 12 weeks. However, this is all under the assumption that the personnel meet the necessary qualifications, training can be conducted without the need for translators, and a few other conditions are met. We have already engaged in discussions with Mrs. Friedberger regarding this matter. If we are talking about combat deployment, then in that case, de facto, we will be advised to support at least the initial group. Planning for this undertaking has proven to be challenging; it took approximately a year to train our personnel initially, and we are now aiming to reduce this timeframe to just ten weeks. Moreover, there is the added concern of ensuring they are capable of handling off-road driving in an F1 car. One possible option is to provide scheduled technical support; theoretically, this can be done from Büchel provided secure communication with Ukraine is established. If this were available, then further planning could be carried out. This is the main scenario at least - to provide full manufacturer support, support through the user support service, which will solve software problems. Basically, it's the same as we have in Germany.

Gerhartz: Hold on a moment. I understand what you're saying. Politicians might be concerned about the direct closed connection between Büchel and Ukraine, which could imply direct involvement in the Ukrainian conflict. But in that case, we can say that information exchange is going to take place through MBDA, and we'll send one or two of our specialists to Schröbenhausen. Of course, this is cunning, but from a political standpoint, it probably looks different. If the information exchange goes through the manufacturer, then it has nothing to do with us.

Fenske: The question will arise as to where the information goes. If we're talking about information on target engagement, ideally including satellite images providing maximum accuracy of up to three meters, then we must first process them in Büchel. I think regardless of this, we can somehow organize an information exchange between Büchel and Schröbenhausen, or we can explore the possibility of transmitting information to Poland, doing it where it's accessible by car. This matter needs to be examined more closely; options will surely emerge. If we are supported, in the worst case scenario we can even travel by car, which will reduce the reaction time. Of course, we won't be able to react within an hour because we'll need to give our consent. In the very best case, only six hours after receiving the information will the planes be able to execute an order.

For hitting specific targets, an accuracy of more than three meters is sufficient, but if target refinement is necessary, we'll need to work with satellite images that allow for modeling. And then the reaction time can be up to 12 hours. It all depends on the target. I haven't studied this issue in detail, but I believe such an option is possible. We just need to figure out how to organize information transmission.

Gerhartz: Do you think we can hope that Ukraine will be able to do everything on its own? After all, it's known that there are numerous people there in civilian attire who speak with an American accent. So it's quite possible that soon they'll be able to use everything themselves, right? After all, they have all the satellite images.

Fenske: Yes, they get them from us. I would also like to touch on air defense issues briefly. We need to seriously consider having equipment in Kiev to receive information from IABG and NDK. We must ensure this is provided to them, which is why I have to fly there on February 21. It is crucial that we plan everything meticulously, unlike what happened with the Storm Shadows where we failed to plan out checkpoints properly. We need to think about how to fly around or fly below the radar coverage sector. If everything is prepared, the training will be more effective. And then we can revisit the question of the number of missiles. If we give them 50, they will be used up very quickly.

Gerhartz: Exactly, it won't change the course of military actions. That's why we don't want to hand them all over. And not all at once. Perhaps 50 in the first batch, then maybe another batch of 50 missiles. It's perfectly clear, but that's all big politics. I suppose that's what it's really about. I've learned from my French and British colleagues that in reality, with these Storm Shadow and Scalp missiles, it's the same as with the Winchester rifles—they might ask, "Why should we supply the next batch of missiles when we've already supplied them? Let Germany do it now." Perhaps, Mr. Frohstedte wants to say something on this matter?

Frohstedte: Allow me to add a bit of pragmatism. I want to share my thoughts on the Storm Shadow's characteristics. Regarding air defense, flight time, flight altitude, and so on, I've come to the conclusion that there are two interesting targets—the bridge to the east and the ammunition depots, which are higher up. The [Crimean] bridge to the east is difficult to reach, it's a relatively small target, but the Taurus can do it, and it can also strike the ammunition depots. Considering all this and comparing it with how much the Storm Shadows and HIMARS have been used, I have a question: "Is our target the bridge or the military depots?" Is it achievable with the current shortcomings that the REDs and Patriots have? And I've come to the conclusion that the limiting factor is that they usually only have 24 shells...

Gerhartz: That's clear.

Frohstedte: It makes sense to involve Ukraine in the process. It'll take a week. I think it's advisable to consider task planning and centralized planning. Task planning in our unit takes two weeks, but if there's interest, it can be done faster. If we're considering the bridge, then I believe Taurus is insufficient, and we need to have an understanding of how it can work, and for that, we need satellite data. I don't know if we can prepare the Ukrainians for such a task in a short time, in a month, for instance. What would a Taurus attack on the bridge look like? From an operational perspective, I can't assess how quickly the Ukrainians will learn to plan such actions and how quickly integration

will occur. But since we're talking about the bridge and military bases, I understand they want to seize them as soon as possible.

Fenske: I would like to add something regarding the destruction of the bridge. We've been intensely studying this issue, and unfortunately, we've come to the conclusion that due to its size, the bridge is akin to a runway. Therefore, it may require more than 10, or even 20 missiles.

Gerhartz: There's an opinion that the Taurus can achieve this if the French Dassault Rafale fighter aircraft is used.

Fenske: They would only be able to create a hole and damage the bridge. And before making important statements, we ourselves...

Frohstedte: I'm not advocating for the idea of targeting the bridge; I pragmatically want to understand what they want. And what we need to teach them, so it turns out that when planning these operations, we will need to indicate the main points on the images. They will have targets, but it's important to consider that when working on smaller targets, planning needs to be more meticulous, rather than just analyzing pictures on the computer. When targets are confirmed, it's simpler, and less time will be spent on planning.

Gerhartz: We all know they want to destroy the bridge, which ultimately signifies how it's guarded—not only because of its military-strategic importance but also its political significance. Even though they have a ground corridor now. There are certain concerns if we have direct communication with the Ukrainian armed forces. So the question arises: can we use such a ruse and assign our people to MBDA? Thus, direct communication with Ukraine will only be through MBDA, which is much better than if such communication exists with our Air Force.

Grefe: Gerhartz, it doesn't matter. We have to make sure that from the very beginning there is no language that makes us a party to the conflict. I'm exaggerating a bit, of course, but if we tell the minister now that we are going to plan meetings and travel by car from Poland so that no one notices, that's already participation, and we won't do that. If we're talking about the manufacturer, the first thing to ask is whether MBDA can do it. It doesn't matter if our people will then deal with it in Büchel or in Schröbenhausen—it still means involvement. And I don't think we should do that. From the very beginning, we defined this as a key element of the "red line," so we'll participate in the training. Let's say we'll prepare a "roadmap." The training process needs to be divided into parts. The long track will take four months, where we'll thoroughly train them, including practicing scenarios with the bridge. The short track will be two weeks so that they can use the missiles as soon as possible. If they are already trained, then we'll ask the British if they are ready to take over at this stage. I believe these actions will be the right ones—just imagine if the press finds out that our people are in Schröbenhausen or that we're driving somewhere in Poland! I find such an option to be unacceptable.

Gerhartz: If such a political decision is made, we must say that the Ukrainians should come to us. First and foremost, we need to know whether such a political decision constitutes direct involvement in task planning. In that case, the training will take a bit longer, and they will be able to tackle more complex tasks, possibly with some

experience and high-tech equipment already in use. If there's a possibility to avoid direct involvement, we can't participate in task planning, do it in Büchel, and then forward it to them—that's a "red line" for Germany. We can train them for two months; they won't learn everything, but they'll learn something. We just need to ensure they can process all the information and work with all the parameters.

Grefe: Zeppel said we can create both an extended and a brief "roadmap." The goal is to get a quick result. And if the initial task is to hit ammunition depots rather than complex objects like bridges, then we can proceed with an abbreviated program and get results quickly. As for information from IABG, I don't see this as a critical issue since they are not tied down to a specific location; they must conduct reconnaissance themselves. It's clear that efficiency depends on this. This is what we discussed regarding missile delivery. It's not decided yet, but that's the plan for now.

Gerhartz: And this will be the main point. There are ammunition depots where short-term preparation won't be possible due to very active air defense. We'll need to seriously look into it. I believe that our people will find a solution. We just need to be allowed to try first so that we can provide better political advice. We need to prepare better so as not to fail because, for example, the KSA may not have an accurate idea of where the air defense systems actually are. The Ukrainians have this information, and we have data from the radars. But if we're talking about precise planning, we need to know where the radars are installed and where the stationary installations are, and how to bypass them. This will allow us to develop a more accurate plan. We have a superb means, and if we have precise coordinates, we can apply it accurately. But there's no basis to say we can't do this. There's a certain threshold where the "red line" politically passes, there's a "long" and "short" path, and there are differences in terms of utilizing the full potential, which the Ukrainians will be able to utilize better over time as they practice and continually work on it. Personally, I don't think I need to be present at the meeting. It's important to me that you present a sober assessment and don't create disruptions that just aren't convincing enough while other countries are supplying Storm Shadow and Scalp.

Grefe: The longer they take to make a decision, the longer it will take us to implement it. We need to break everything down into stages. Start with the simple first, and then move on to the complex. Or we can ask the British if they can support us at the initial stage, and have them take on the planning issues? We should facilitate whatever falls within our area of responsibility. Developing mounts for missiles is not our task; Ukraine should resolve this with the manufacturers on their own.

Gerhartz: Right now, we wouldn't want to encounter problems with the budget committee. It could make it impossible to start construction work at the airbase in Büchel in 2024. Right now, every day counts when it comes to the program.