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Yesterday [March 1, 2024] at 1:55 p.m

Transcript of a conversation between high-ranking Bundeswehr officers dated 02/19/2024

On February 19, 2024, **between the head of the operations and exercises department of the Bundeswehr Air Force command Graefe** , the Bundeswehr BBC inspector **Gerhartz** and the employees of the air operations center of the Bundeswehr Space Command **Fenske** and **Frostedte** . the following conversation took place

Gerhartz : Hello everyone! Graefe, are you in Singapore now?

Graefe : Yes.

Gerhartz : Okay. We need to verify the information. As you have already heard, Defense Minister Pistorius intends to carefully consider the issue of supplying Taurus missiles to Ukraine. We have a meeting planned with him. Everything needs to be discussed so that we can start working on this issue. So far I do not see that the start date of these deliveries has been indicated. It was not like the chancellor told him: "I want to get information now, and tomorrow morning we will make a decision." I haven't heard anything like this. On the contrary, Pistorius evaluates this entire ongoing discussion. Nobody knows why the Federal Chancellor is blocking these supplies. Of course, the most incredible rumors appear. Let me give you an 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 who told her this. She replied that someone in military uniform told her this. Of course, this is a low-level source of information, but the journalist latched onto these words and wants to make a big deal out of it with the headline: "Now we know the reason why the Chancellor refuses to send Taurus missiles - they won't work." This is all stupidity. Such topics are available only to a limited circle of people. However, we see what kind of nonsense is spreading in the meantime, they are talking complete nonsense. I want to agree on this issue with you so that we do not move in the wrong direction. First of all, I now have questions for Frostedt and Fenske. Has anyone talked to you about this topic? Did Freuding contact you?

Frostedte : No. I only communicated with Graefe.

Fenske : The same thing, I only communicated with Graefe.

Gerhartz : Perhaps he will contact you again. I will probably have to participate in hearings in the budget commission, because problems have arisen related to rising prices for the

conversion of infrastructure for the F-35 in Büchel. I have already conveyed my recommendations through Frank so that we have slides to visualize the material. We showed him a test presentation where Taurus missiles were installed on a Tornado carrier or on another carrier required by the assignment. However, I have a hard time imagining this. It is necessary to remember that this is a half-hour meeting, so you should not prepare a presentation of 30 slides. There should be a short report. It is necessary to show what a rocket can do, how it can be used. It is necessary to take into account, if we make a political decision to transfer missiles as aid to Ukraine, what consequences this may lead to. I will be grateful to you if you tell me not only what problems we have, but how we can solve them. For example, if we talk about delivery methods... I know how the British do it. They always transport them in Ridgback armored vehicles. They have several people on site. The French don't do that. They supply Q7 with Scalp missiles to Ukraine. Storm Shadow and Scalp have similar technical specifications for their installation. How will we solve this problem? Will we be putting MBDA missiles with Ridgback in their hands? Will one of our people be assigned to MBDA? Graefe, report to us what our position is on this issue. Messrs. Fenske and Frohstedte, report how you see the situation.

Graefe : I will start with the most sensitive issues, with the existing criticism regarding supplies. Discussions take place almost everywhere. There are several most important aspects here. Firstly, these are delivery times. If the Chancellor now decides that we should supply missiles, they will be transferred from the Bundeswehr. Okay, but they won't be ready for use until eight months. Secondly, we cannot shorten the time. Because if we do this, then an erroneous use may occur, a rocket may fall on a kindergarten, and again there will be civilian casualties. These aspects must be taken into account. It should be noted during the negotiations that we cannot do anything without the manufacturer. They can equip, rearm, and deliver the first missiles. We can catch up with production a little, but we shouldn't wait for 20 pieces to accumulate, we can transfer five at a time. The delivery time of these missiles directly depends on the industry. Who will pay for this? Another question is what weapon systems will these missiles be mounted on? How should interaction between the company and Ukraine be maintained? Or do we have some kind of integration?

Gerhartz : I think not. Because the manufacturer TSG said that they can solve this problem within six months, no matter whether it is a Sukhoi or an F-16.

Graefe : If the Federal Chancellor decides to go for it, then there must be an understanding that it will take six months just to produce the fastenings. Thirdly, theoretically we may be affected by the issue of training. I have already said that we are collaborating with a rocket manufacturer. They train in the maintenance of these systems, and we train in tactical use. It takes three to four months. This part of the training can take place in Germany. When the first

missiles are delivered, we need to make quick decisions regarding mountings and training. We may have to turn to the British on these issues and take advantage of their know-how. We can transmit to them databases, satellite images, planning stations. Apart from the supplies of the missiles themselves, which we have, everything else can be supplied by industry or the IABG.

Gerhartz : We have to imagine that they can use aircraft with Taurus missile mounts and Storm Shadow mounts. The British were there and equipped the planes. The systems are not that different and can be used for the Taurus as well. I can speak about the experience of using the Patriot complex. At first, our experts also calculated long deadlines, but they managed to cope in a matter of weeks. They managed to put everything into operation so quickly and in such quantity that our employees said: “Wow. We didn’t expect this.” We are now fighting a war that uses much more modern technology than our good old Luftwaffe. This all suggests that when we are planning deadlines, we should not overestimate them. And now, Messrs. Fenske and Frostedte, I would like to hear your opinion regarding possible supplies to Ukraine.

Fenske : I would like to touch on the issue of training. We have already studied this issue, and if we are dealing with personnel who already have the appropriate training and will undergo training in parallel, it will first take about three weeks to learn the technique and only then proceed directly to training in the Air Force, which will last about four weeks So it's much less than 12 weeks. Of course, all this is provided that the staff has the appropriate qualifications; training can be carried out without resorting to the services of translators, and a couple more points. We have already spoken with Mrs. Friedberger. If we are talking about combat use, then de facto we will be advised to provide support to at least the first group. Planning is difficult, it took about a year to train our staff, and we are now trying to reduce this time to ten weeks and at the same time hope that they will be able to race off-road in a Formula 1 car. A possible option is to provide scheduled technical support; theoretically, this can be done from Büchel, subject to the creation of a secure connection with Ukraine. If this were available, then further planning could be carried out. This is the main scenario at a minimum - to provide full support from the manufacturer, support through a user support service that will solve problems with the software. In principle, everything is the same as it happens here in Germany.

Gerhartz : Wait a minute. I understand what you are talking about. Politicians may be concerned about the direct, closed connection between Büchel and Ukraine, which could become direct participation in the Ukrainian conflict. But in this case, we can say that the exchange of information will take place through MBDA, and we will send one or two of our specialists to Schrobenhausen. Of course, this is a trick, but from a political point of view it

may look different. If information is exchanged through the manufacturer, then this is not associated with us.

Fenske : The question will arise where the information goes. If we are talking about target information, which ideally includes satellite images with maximum accuracy of up to three meters, then we must first process them in Büchel. I think that regardless of this, it is possible to somehow organize the exchange of information between Büchel and Schrobenhausen, or we can work out the possibility of transferring information to Poland, doing it where you can get there by car. This issue needs to be looked at more closely; options will certainly appear. If we are supported, then in the worst case scenario we can even travel by car, which will reduce response time. Of course, we will not be able to respond within an hour, since we will need to give our consent. In the best case scenario, only six hours after receiving the information will the aircraft be able to carry out the order. To hit certain targets, an accuracy of more than three meters is sufficient, but if it is necessary to clarify the target, you need to work with satellite images that allow it to be modeled. And then the response time can be up to 12 hours. It all depends on the goal. I have not studied this issue in detail, but I believe that this option is also possible. All we need to say is that we need to think about how to organize the transfer of information.

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

Fenske : Yes. They get them from us. I would also like to briefly touch on air defense issues. We must think carefully about having equipment in Kyiv to receive information from the IABG and NDK. We have to provide this to them, so I have to fly there on February 21, we need to plan everything optimally, and not like it was with Storm Shadow, when they planned control points. We need to think about how to fly around or fly below the radar field of view. If everything is prepared, the training will be more effective. And then we can again return to the question of the number of missiles. If you give 50 pieces, they will be used up very quickly.

Gerhartz : That's right, it won't change the course of the war. So we don't want to transfer them all. And not all at the same time. Perhaps 50 in the first tranche, then perhaps there will be another tranche of 50 missiles. This is completely understandable, but all this is big politics. I guess there's actually something behind it. I learned from my French and British colleagues that in fact the situation with these Storm Shadow and Scalp rifles is the same as with the Winchester rifles - they may ask: "Why should we supply the next batch of missiles,

since we have already they did it, let Germany do it now.” Maybe Mr. Frostedte wants to say something on this topic?

Frostedte : Let me add a little pragmatism. I want to share my thoughts on the characteristics of Storm Shadow. We are talking about air defense, flight time, flight altitude and so on, I came to the conclusion that there are two interesting targets - the bridge to the east and the ammunition depots that are higher up. The bridge in the east is difficult to reach, it is a fairly small target, but the Taurus can do it, and ammunition depots can also hit. If we take all this into account and compare it with how much Storm Shadow and HIMARS were used, then I have a question: “Is our goal a bridge or military warehouses?” Is this achievable with the current shortcomings that RED and y Patriot have? And I've come to the conclusion that the limiting factor is that they usually only have 24 charges...

Gerhartz: That's understandable.

Frostedte : It makes sense to join Ukraine to the TPP. It will take a week. I think it makes sense to think about task scheduling and centralized planning. Planning tasks in our connection takes two weeks, but if there is an interest in this, then it can be done faster. If we look at the bridge, then I think that Taurus is not enough and we need to have an idea of how it can work, and for this we need data from satellites. I don't know if we will be able to prepare Ukrainians for such a task in a short time, and we are talking about a month. What would a Taurus attack on the bridge look like? From an operational perspective, I cannot estimate how quickly the Ukrainians will be able to learn to plan such actions and how quickly integration will occur. But since we are talking about a bridge and military bases, I understand that they want to get them as soon as possible.

Fenske : I would like to say one more thing about the destruction of the bridge. We intensively studied this issue and, unfortunately, came to the conclusion that the bridge, due to its size, is similar to a runway. Therefore, it may not require 10 or even 20 missiles.

Gerhartz : There is an opinion that Taurus will succeed if it uses the French Dassault Rafale fighter.

Fenske : All they can do is make a hole and damage the bridge.

And before we make important statements, we must ourselves...

Frostedte : I'm not pushing the bridge idea, I pragmatically want to understand what they want. And what we should 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 goals, but it should be

taken into account that when working on small goals, you need to plan more carefully, and not analyze pictures on the computer. In the case of confirmed goals, everything is simpler and planning will take less time.

Gerhartz : We all know that they want to destroy the bridge, what this ultimately means, how they protect it - not only because it has important military-strategic, but also political significance. Although they now have a ground corridor. There are certain concerns if we have direct communication with the Ukrainian armed forces. Therefore, the question arises: can we use such a trick and second our people to MBDA? Thus, direct communication with Ukraine will only be through MBDA, this is much better than if such a connection exists with our Air Force.

Graefe : Gerhartz, it doesn't matter. We need to make sure that from the very beginning there is no language that makes us a party to the conflict. Of course, I am exaggerating a little, but if we now tell the minister that we will schedule meetings and travel by car from Poland so that no one notices, this is already participation, we will not do this. If we are talking about a manufacturer, then first of all we should ask MBDA if they can do this. It does not matter whether our people then do this in Büchel or in Schrobenhausen - it is still participation. And I think that this should not be done. At the very beginning we identified this as a core element of the red line, so we will be involved in training. Let's say that we will prepare a road map. It is necessary to divide the learning process into parts. The long trek will last four months, we will train them thoroughly, including working on the bridge option. Short - will be designed for two weeks so that they can use the missiles as early as possible. If they are already trained, then we will ask whether the British are ready to deal with them at this stage. I believe that such actions will be correct - just imagine if the press finds out that our people are in Schrobenhausen or that we are driving cars somewhere in Poland! I consider this option unacceptable.

Gerhartz : If such a political decision is made, we must say that the Ukrainians must come to us. We first need to know if such a policy decision is not directly involved in task planning, in which case the training will take a little longer, they will be able to perform more complex tasks, which is quite possible they already have some experience and use high-tech equipment. If it is possible to avoid direct participation, we cannot participate in task planning, do it in Büchel and then forward it to them - for Germany this is a "red line". You can train them for two months, during which they will not learn everything, but they will be able to do something. We just have to make sure that they are able to process all the information and work with all the parameters.

Graefe : Seppel said that it is possible to make a long and a short road map. The point is to get results in a short time. And if at the first stage the task is to hit ammunition depots, and not such complex objects as bridges, then in this case you can proceed with a shortened program and get quick results. As for the information from the IABG, I do not consider this problem critical, since they are not tied to a specific place, they themselves must conduct reconnaissance. It is clear that efficiency depends on this. This is exactly what we talked about, that it is worth taking this into account when transferring missiles. It hasn't been decided yet. But that's the way it is.

Gerhartz : And that would be the highlight. There are ammunition depots for which short training cannot be carried out due to very active air defense. This will need to be seriously addressed. I think that our people will find an option. We just need to be allowed to try first, so that we can give better political advice. We need to be better prepared so we don't fail because the KSA may have no idea where the air defense systems actually are. The Ukrainians have such information, we have data from radars. But if we are talking about precise planning, then we must know where the radars are installed and where the fixed installations are, how to bypass them. This will allow you to develop a more accurate plan. We have a super tool, and if we have precise coordinates, we will be able to use it accurately. But there is no basis to say that we cannot do this. There is a certain scale where the “red line” lies politically, there is a “long” and a “short” path, there are differences in terms of using the full potential, which over time Ukrainians will be able to better use, since they will have practice, they will do this all the time. I don't think I should personally attend the meeting. It is important to me that we present a sober assessment and do not add fuel to the fire, as others do by supplying Storm Shadow and Scalp.

Graefe : I want to say, the longer they take to make a decision, the longer it will take us to implement all this. We need to divide everything into stages. First, start with the simple ones, and then move on to the complex ones. Or can we turn to the British, can they provide us with support at the initial stage and take on planning issues? We can force what lies within our area of responsibility. The development of mounts for missiles is not one of our tasks; Ukraine must resolve this issue independently with manufacturers.

Gerhartz : We wouldn't want to get into trouble right now because of the budget commission. This may make it impossible to start construction work at the Büchel airbase in 2024. Every day now counts in the program.