Inspekteur des Heeres
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Keynote
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im Hofbräuhaus

Es gilt das gesprochene Wort!

Check against delivery!

Ladies and Gentlemen,

after a delicious breakfast and the profound conversations, I would like to kindly ask you to draw your attention and focus your imaginations to the following situation:

Imagine you have a budget of two billion dollars, the brightest minds in the world, and a mission that is physically impossible.

Worst of all: you have no time.

In 1942, the Manhattan Project faced a severe problem: they needed uranium-235. The problem was that this uranium is almost identical to ordinary uranium-238. Separating it is like trying to separate the white grains of sand from the light gray ones in a sandstorm.

The scientists tried everything: centrifuges, gas diffusion, thermal separation. Nothing was efficient enough. The military leader, General Leslie Groves, made a decision that would drive any controller crazy today. He didn't say, "Find the best solution." He said, "Build everything at once." He had all three factories built simultaneously – completely different industrial branches. He invested billions, risking failure, for the chance of gaining a few months. He didn't plan innovation; he forced it.

The key takeaway for us today: That wasn't just nuclear physics. It was the birth of parallel processing. One of the side effects of technological advancements there is that we now have artificial intelligence.

But what can we learn from this?

When urgency is at its peak, efficiency isn't about avoiding mistakes, but about the speed at which we make them simultaneously. True innovation doesn't come from lengthy deliberation, but from the courage just to do things.

Why am I telling you this? Because this is a very fitting historical example that shows what is possible when you have the right attitude. The Manhattan Project is just one example, but it illustrates:

1. the importance of effectively linking think tanks
2. thinking across sectors.

What does that mean for us today?

We have all of the above points as prerequisites, but sometimes we struggle to link them, reduce bureaucracy, eliminate outdated processes and as a consequence increase speed, distribute multiple instructions simultaneously and demand results just as quickly. This means

that we need to foster our innovative spirit, that we must think creatively, and that we must develop "out-of-the-box" ideas and think unthinkable thoughts. Like General Leslie Groves did. We don't have time. The enemy isn't waiting for our final report. We are now prepared to defend.

All of us sitting here have one clear goal: combat readiness and being prepared for the future. So that we can successfully deter today and tomorrow. So that, when it matters, we can win. So that we can preserve peace. We don’t have time to argue with our lawyers, to hinder or obstruct each other with campaigns.
If we don’t align our actions with this goal, we will ultimately end up empty-handed.
Anything else will only help and strengthen our enemies.

To achieve our common goal, we have to consider two factors: the current threat and the evolution of modern warfare. Let me therefore briefly share my assessment of the current security situation and our plan to strengthen and empower the army in the coming months and years.

Threat Situation

You are aware of the threat situation; we have discussed it often in recent years: We continually see that Russia, in its own perception, is already in conflict with the West, is already waging it – currently in a hybrid, covert manner, testing our military capabilities and our ever-increasing resilience.
And the Russian military, despite the heavy losses it suffers in the war against Ukraine, is growing and it is growing quickly. And it is learning – technology and tactics. Thus, looking into the future, a full-scale war in Europe at least can’t be entirely ruled out, if we are not prepared. If we are not capable to deter.

Future Warfare

Now, let me talk about the second factor – the development of future warfare. The battlefield of the future in the land domain is networked, data-driven, asymmetrical, transparent to the point of being glassy, and influenced by AI. At the heart of warfare will be "data-centric warfare." Data as a central resource, essentially the "ammunition" of warfare. The battlefield of the future will be defined by competing "protective shields" – A2AD-bubbles – that will be

dynamic and multidimensional; and which are the fundamental prerequisite for manoeuvre operations. The goal is to maintain one's own protective shield permanently while simultaneously penetrating that of the enemy, to overwhelm the enemy with a multitude of orchestrated effects in all dimensions and then defeat him with highly dynamic warfare.
If this succeeds, the initiative can be gained even with a clear quantitative superiority of the enemy. This said, it is not only high tech that will matter. On the battlefield, we will always experience a simultaneity of past, present, and future – from trench warfare to classic combined arms warfare to multi-domain operations. Thus, we also need large numbers of low cost systems, for example small UAS, but also larger numbers of traditional high value systems, like battle tanks.

This is just a very brief description of the challenges we face and very different things are happening simultaneously: complexity is increasing, parallel processes are emerging.
As you can see, parallel processing is not unique to the Manhattan Project; it is also a challenge for our project today, the defence of the Euro-Atlantic area.

But how do we approach it?
For the German Army I will make every effort to have an army that is ready to fight, that is robust and capable to win, that will contribute to safeguarding peace and freedom. Nothing more, but nothing less. This is a very high ambition, but we can't fail short.

To succeed, we have to combine complex subsystems into one large project. The result must be a combat ready one-stop solution. This is only possible through close cooperation among **all** stakeholders – industry, business, military and policy. We all need to improve collaboration. It is our national, European, transatlantic responsibility.
What I learned in Ukraine is, once and again, that defence industry can have a free-market competition and still work together towards a common goal. And it is not only because we share the common goal of freedom but because there is more than enough market share for all players.
As the Chief of the German Army, I have defined four lines of operation in the Army we will follow: operational readiness – growth – innovation – leadership culture.
For reasons of time, I will limit myself to the first three, specifically on innovation.

Operational Readiness

The most important question for me at the moment is: How is the German Army be prepared for the fight tonight?

To state it right from the start – we are ready! Our soldiers are highly motivated and exceptionally well-trained. I see this time and again during my visits to the units. The soldiers know their job. They know what they are serving for. They are innovative and creative and find a solution for every problem.

However, we also know that there are gaps, and simply accepting the status quo without acknowledging these capability gaps is not an option. We need to close these gaps by any means. In my responsibility as Chief of the Army, I don't care how we close these gaps. The only thing is: I need them closed – better tonight than tomorrow, but in any case faster than we did in the past.

Growth

But we are not just closing gaps. The changed security situation has made one thing clear: the army must grow! We must address both personnel and equipment shortages and implement new capabilities. We have established new units, most notably Brigade 45 in Lithuania, which most clearly underscores our commitment to defending alliance territory on the eastern borders of the alliance – every inch of alliance territory.

Ladies and gentlemen,

talking about growth of the Army, I also get the question: "Are we buying the right things, or shouldn't we be investing much more in innovation?" In the land domain, we need protection, mobility, striking power, the ability to seize and hold territory, and all of this networked and partially automated. This, to a certain extent, requires still traditional systems like battle tanks, howitzers, etc. Everything which supports the infantry man to put his/her boots on the ground. But as much as I am convinced of this, we must simultaneously, of course, embrace the aforementioned developments in the nature of warfare. It is not an "either/or," but rather an "AND." We need conventional and we need innovative systems. Both teamed up by the soldier in the loop. This brings me to innovation as the next line of operation.

Innovation

Innovation must primarily originate "down below," where the soldiers seek and find their solutions to a tactical problem. I have repeatedly experienced and witnessed this in Ukraine. And during my army units in recent weeks, I have seen excellent approaches, for example, to the use of drones, which were developed at the unit level. Therefore, we will give our soldiers in the Army the space to test and experiment and we will enforce a culture in which innovation can flourish.

Ladies and gentlemen,
rapid progress in innovation is both necessary and possible because many framework conditions have improved significantly in recent months primarily through the sectoral exemption for defense spending. But in order to leverage these framework conditions we also need a certain set of guiding principles for procurement projects in order to achieve war readiness for the German army:

First, we still need high technology – whether in traditional main weapon systems, or in what we currently call innovative systems.
However, this high technology must be sufficiently robust and easy to operate. And we need mass production as well as rapid replacement, maintainability and a constant availability of spare parts.
Second, we need systems easy to use with the first pre-production vehicle. Our systems must be intuitive and reliable to operate in rain and snow, heat and cold, with dirty gloves – and even without a university degree. This requires the involvement of soldiers from day one. The army is always ready for such an approach.
Thirdly, and this applies to both traditional and innovative systems: they must be developed and manufactured with open interfaces. This is the prerequisite for networking, technological openness, and interoperability. And for continuous development, keyword: Software Defined Defence.
Fourthly, the armed forces must be able to rely on agreements regarding timelines and quality. We need the same sense of urgency and the same ambition for excellence among all stakeholders involved.
Fifthly, and closely related: we don't have time. Readiness is not declared – it is demanded by the threat. As Chief of the Army, I would be acting irresponsibly if I did not consider how to

bridge our capability gaps by unconventional steps. Why not consider purchasing battle-proven systems from Ukraine? Why not integrating start-ups into innovation developments in Army Doctrine Command?
And finally, **sixthly**, in land combat quantity matters. Rapid scalability, supply chain autonomy, cost-benefit ratio are decisive.

Ladies and gentlemen,
Let me come back to our initial scenario. History shows us, resources matter. Talent matters. But in the end, what matters most is the courage to decide and the discipline to deliver – before the enemy decides for us.

I thank you for the opportunity to present to you today our intention to strengthen our land forces and my expectations how we can deliver together.
We have a common task. To defend our security and freedom. There is no bigger task.
I am counting on you to succeed together.