

Speech to the plenary by Christine Buchholz, 2 June 2020

### **Bundeswehr in Mali: No wiser after Afghanistan**

Christine Buchholz (The Left Party): President! Ladies and Gentlemen!

For the Federal Government, Mali is a building block for keeping the Bundeswehr deployed internationally non-stop.

In 2015 the Minister of Defence at the time, Ursula von der Leyen, put it like this: “Our interests have no hard and fast boundary, neither geographically nor qualitatively.”

This kind of policy does not create peace: neither in Mali nor elsewhere.

(Applause from the Left Party)

In March, the Federal Government presented a report on the situation in Mali. In it, it admits not having achieved any of the official objectives.

But to date it has failed to explain why this is the case. That is why we recently addressed 50 questions to the Federal Government on the mission in Mali. More than half of the questions were not answered.

For instance, you are unable to say anything about the number of lives lost in the Mali conflict. You fail to provide an overview of fighting and incidents involving German soldiers. You do not know the identity of the Malian soldiers trained. You fail to comment on when, where and how you are supporting the French counter-terrorism operation Barkhane.

We can only conclude from this that either your actions lack any plan, or you are trying to play us for fools. I fear both are the case.

(Applause from the Left Party)

Come clean finally! The mission has long since developed a momentum of its own. Just this week in the Defence Committee - as Mr Otte has just confirmed once again - the CDU/CSU and the SPD have been discussing the deployment of German combat drones in Mali in the future.

This is crazy. Stop this!

(Applause from the Left Party)

In Mali and the Sahel, you are truly repeating all the mistakes made during the Afghanistan mission. First you conceal your real geostrategic and economic motives and interests, then you deny the reality on the ground, and finally the military operation escalates further and further from year to year.

(Dr Johann David Wadephul (CDU/CSU): We are talking about a UN mandate, Madam Colleague! What are you talking about? We are not talking about EUTM Mali, we are talking about MINUSMA!)

State Secretary Tauber may not like the comparison with Afghanistan, but he did recently concede in the Defence Committee that one could by all means compare the length of the Mali mission to Afghanistan.

We say: No, we cannot allow a repeat of Afghanistan.

(Applause from the Left Party - Dr Johann David Wadephul (CDU/CSU): You are saying no to the United Nations! You're completely off topic!)

Incidentally: Like in Afghanistan, the Malian population is also growing increasingly critical towards the deployment of the Bundeswehr and other UN soldiers.

(Dr Johann David Wadehul (CDU/CSU): For you even the UN soldiers are still something aggressive! Unbelievable!)

A recent survey by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation in Mali found that 78 per cent of the Malian population is unhappy with MINUSMA, 60 per cent of these very unhappy.

The main criticism: MINUSMA is just an end in itself. Those surveyed are right.

It is time to put an end to the logic of military escalation. Bring back the Bundeswehr from Mali and the entire Sahel region at last!

Thank you.

(Applause from the Left Party - Alexander Graf Lambsdorff (FDP): Bring our boys home! Donald Trump couldn't have put it better!)