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**Basic Principles of the German Bundeswehr Reserve Concept**

1. **Reorientation of the Bundeswehr – reorientation of the reserve**

In 2010, the Bundeswehr launched one of the most comprehensive structural reforms in its history. An essential element of this reorientation is to suspend compulsory military service, on which the German Bundestag had decided in this context.

The new manpower structure model envisages a strength of 170,000 temporary-career and regular soldiers, up to 12,500 volunteers with enlistment terms between 7 and 23 months, and 55,000 civilian employees.

As part of this reform, the reorientation of the reserve forces was also implemented as well, the conceptual basis for which was issued on 1 February 2012. Similar to the reorientation of the Bundeswehr as a whole, completion of the reorientation of the reserve forces is scheduled for 2017. In other words, the process is still in full swing and far from being completed.

The main purpose of the reserve is to ensure both personnel augmentation and personnel reinforcement of the Bundeswehr as well as the performance of homeland defence duties. Even though the force posture of the Bundeswehr is geared to providing the capabilities laid down in the Bundeswehr Concept without mobilization, the reserve forces are to provide the prerequisites for a build-up adequate to the respective security situation.

Valid as a political principle already since 2003, the *principle of voluntariness* had to be taken into consideration in the context of the reorientation of the reserve. Political principle means that the legal provisions governing compulsory military service continue to apply to reservists, and the compulsory employment of reservists de jure continues to be possible. However, this possibility is not made use of in peacetime.

In accordance with the new Legal Status of Reservists Act of 2011, enlistment for reserve duty, i.e. active-duty service in the Bundeswehr, will be possible irrespective of rank only until the end of the 65th year.

1. **Reserve Designations and strength**

According to the current planning derived from the Bundeswehr Reserve Concept, the number of reservists *designated for assignment*, the so-called *augmentation strength*, is to comprise in future approximately 61,000 reservists. The augmentation strength consists of two categories in almost equal numbers, namely the *reinforcement reserve* and the *manpower reserve*.

The *reinforcement reserve* will comprise only posts in the organizational structure of the Bundeswehr that can be filled by reservists. This will include military units made up exclusively by reservists (so-called *roundup units*) mainly at company level (totalling about 12,200 posts), the reservists-only *territorial liaison organization* to civilian authorities at the level of rural and government district (totalling about 4,300 posts), *regional security and support forces* as well as other units intended for providing internal support services (about 5,000 posts) and some 10,000 individual post at Bundeswehr agencies of all levels.

Whereas the reinforcement reserve is bound to the organisational structures, the *manpower reserve* provides commanders at all levels with an opportunity to flexibly *mirror* *active-duty posts* *for reservists* and fill them with available reservists in accordance with own requirements. Basically, up to 20 % of the posts of a unit may be mirrored. And this amounts to approximately 30,000 posts for reservists.

However, barely 50 % of the existing posts are actually filled at present. Accordingly, the target set for 2017 is to reverse the current downward trend which may be also caused by structural changes in the reserve and to achieve that requirements are met as completely as possible. The necessary prerequisites are to be created by the recently developed *concept of advising reservists* which is aiming to advise any retiring soldier in due time about his opportunities as a reservist and make him declare that he would generally be willing to be assigned.

1. **Reserve duty**

The funds for reserve duty included in the defence budget are sufficient to allow for up to 2,500 reservists to do active service in the Bundeswehr every day a year – regardless of rank. As this ceiling must on average be observed only in the course of a year, it may be either more or less every single day. In 2014 two thirds of the exercises of reservists took up to 19 days.

The career prospects of reservists are basically the same like those of active-duty soldiers including the rank of colonel. To obtain necessary qualifications on their respective current assignment post and for their future career reservists may attend in accordance with requirements most training courses offered at the training facilities of the Bundeswehr.

1. **Reservists not designated for assignment**

Aside from the reservists designated for assignment, the Bundeswehr Reserve Concept also takes into consideration the *reservists not designated for assignment*. There are two reasons for this: On the one hand the reservist not designated for assignment of today may be the reservist designated for assignment of tomorrow. On the other hand the Bundeswehr Reserve Concept recognizes the role of reservists who have positively experienced their term of active duty in the Bundeswehr to be positive information carriers to communicate security policy issues to arouse the interest for security policy and to campaign for the armed forces.

This so-called *mediator role* can also be filled by reservists older than 65 years and, therefore, no longer eligible under military law. Against the background of the suspension of compulsory military service and the continued reduction of the personnel strength of the Bundeswehr, this mediator role has gained significantly in importance, as now there are wide parts of the country, where the Bundeswehr is no longer present and does not play a major role in public life any longer. Reservists are able to close this gap at least in part.

1. **Bundeswehr Reservist Association**

Support and training of reservists not designated for assignment is mainly a responsibility of the *Bundeswehr Reservist Association*. Although a civilian association organizationally independent of the Bundeswehr, it is referred to in the Bundeswehr Reserve Concept as a "specifically authorised provider of support for reservist work outside the Bundeswehr ", thus making it stand out from the other associations active in the field of reservist work. At present, the Bundeswehr Reservist Association has approximately 114,000 members, about 15,000 of which are reservists designated for assignment. Traditionally, the President of the Reservist Association is a member of the German Bundestag.

To support its special role, the Reservist Association receives a dedicated annual subsidy from the federal budget. Most of this subsidy is used for covering the personnel cost of the full-time organization comprising 105 branch offices with some 280 permanent staff members. This organization is obliged to also act as a point of contact for reservists who are not member of the Reservist Association.

1. **Territorial organisation**

When it comes to military training in the so-called *reservist work not related to designations for assignment*, the activities of the Reservist Association go hand in hand with the training offers of the 16 *Land commands* which maintain a nation-wide organization comprising 21 *staff officers for reserve affairs* (in the rank of major/lieutenant colonel) and 119 *non-commissioned officers for reserve affairs* (in the rank of staff sergeant/master sergeant) for the support of reservist work not related to designations for assignment. This active personnel will mainly organize training measures that require military status (mainly military firing practice).

1. **Employers support**

Another challenge in the framework of the reorientation of the reserve is to improve the *support of employers* both in private industry and in public service for the commitment of their employees in the reserve. Although employers may de jure still be forced to release employees for performing reserve duties – the stipulations governing compulsory military service continue to apply – there is *de facto* also a general *requirement for employers’ consent*, due to the principle of voluntariness applying to reservists.

As long as their employees are performing reserve duty, employers are not obliged to pay them any wage. However, any additional compensating payments for employers do not yet exist.

Work on an *information package for employers* is also in development. This package is meant to inform employers in advance of their employees’ possible reserve duties about the purpose of the reserve and the reserve concept and their legal and financial obligations. And there are also plans from 2016 to bestow an *award* at the federal level once a year on companies committed to reservist support.

1. **Conclusion**

The challenge of the new Bundeswehr Reserve Concept is to continue to recruit and retain interested and suitable reservists as well as qualified individuals who have not done any military service. To this end, it will be necessary to improve the prerequisites to achieve a broad acceptance among both the reservists and their employers for rendering service in the Bundeswehr.