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NATO Modernization: The West German Armed Forces

Interagency Intelligence Memorandum

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KEY JUDGMENTS

The Bundeswehr—the West German Federal Armed Forces—is the most effective European national contingent in NATO. Bundeswehr components are defensively oriented and conceptually a part of the NATO military command structure. Despite continuing implementation of equipment modernization programs during the next five years, military leaders will be hard pressed to maintain current levels of readiness. (C NF)

In terms of both size and capability, the West German Army is a bulwark of NATO's defense, while the Air Force and Navy play lesser but still substantial roles in terms of combat potential. All three components are in the midst of modernization programs; nevertheless, deficiencies in certain mission areas will remain. Beyond individual component weaknesses, however, the Bundeswehr is vulnerable in three major areas—air defense, electronic warfare, and sustainability—which could impinge on the effectiveness of the overall force. (C NF)

By the late 1980s, manpower shortages, brought on by low birth rates, and fiscal limitations will have forced policymakers in Bonn to choose between a diminished national security posture or significantly greater personal and financial sacrifices on the part of the West German population. Solutions to these problems will be sought externally, through multilateral arms control agreements and increased reliance on Allies, and internally, through adjustments to conscription laws and to the Bundeswehr's force structure and operational concepts. (S NF)

For more than a decade there has been a gradual erosion of the West German political consensus on security issues and an increased questioning of the credibility of US security guarantees. T [REDACTED]

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The erosion of consensus on security policy may complicate Bonn's relations with NATO Allies and create a less favorable political climate for implementing national force plans. (C NF)

The economic and demographic constraints under which the Bundeswehr will be placed by the end of the 1980s will allow very little latitude for additional defense commitments, such as might be entailed