

## Federal Chancellor Konrad Adenauer and Defense Minister Theodor Blank Visit the First Bundeswehr Training Battalion (January 20, 1956)

### Abstract

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The first 101 Bundeswehr soldiers were appointed in November 1955. At the beginning of January 1956, an additional 2,000 volunteers joined them at their training camp in Andernach am Rhein (south of Bonn). Since there was still no legal basis for military conscription, the Bundeswehr was initially dependent on volunteers. At the Andernach camp, recruits were divided into training battalions and received three months of instruction. The establishment, arming, and training of the West German armed forces were heavily supported by the NATO allies, especially the United States. On January 20, 1956, Chancellor Konrad Adenauer (middle of the picture, hat in hand), General Hans Speidel (at far left), Defense Minister Theodor Blank (second from left), Lieutenant General Adolf Heusinger (behind Adenauer), and Major General Helmuth Laegeler (at right, next to Adenauer) inspected the training battalions. Both Speidel and Heusinger had held high-ranking positions in the Wehrmacht of the Third Reich, but they had also had contact with the German resistance. Adenauer used the opportunity to remind the soldiers of their duty to ensure peace. On July 7, 1956, after a long debate in both houses of parliament, the Bundestag finally decided to institute compulsory military service, which made conscription into the Bundeswehr possible.

### Source

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Source: Chancellor Konrad Adenauer and Defense Minister Theodor Blank visiting the Bundeswehr's first training battalion, 1956. Unknown photographer.

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