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Ho w Germany sees TKF9 0
J. M. RAMSDE N has been talking to the Luftwaffe, the West German Defence Ministry, Messerschmitt-Bolkow-Blohm, Panavia, Motoren- und Turbinen-Union and Dornier about Germany's new TKF90 fighter requirement, Tornado and Alpha Jet.

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F THE British had not joined Airbus
Industrie, West Germany would
have tended to co-operate in the mili-
tary field with the French or the Americans. This is the view of the Federal Government in Bonn.

TKF90 (Taktische Kampflugzeuge for 1990) designates the Luftwaffe requirement for a new air-to-air fighter to replace Phantoms. Air-to-ground is secondary; Tornado and Alpha Jet or their derivatives will meet Germany's strike requirements until the year 2000.
The Germans are looking for part-ners with whom to harmonise TKF90 industrially and operationally. "We have a definite preference for Pan-avia as the basis of European military co-operation," says a Bonn official. The Economics Ministry does not see Panavia as a dead end, despite the MBB and Dornier US partnerships on TKF, and Aeritalia's AM-X talks with Saab.

But alas for Panavia and Nato, and for their friends and relations, the RAF Air Staff Target 403 calls for a Harrier/Jaguar replacement, which spells primarily air-to-ground and apparently—with a 1,500ft take-off— an element of Vtol.

The Germans may be wondering why the RAF—which for 20 years has

specified no fighter except Tornado ADV, and whose air-to-ground re-quirements appear to be covered by Tornado, Harrier, Jaguar, Hawk and their derivatives until at least 2000— is specifying another air-to-grounder. When the British, French and German defence ministers met at Ditchley Park, Oxfordshire, in July they agreed to work together on a future fighter. The air staffs are work-ing as an offshoot of the Independent Programme Group (IPG), a "dialogue linkage" between the European Nato allies and the non-Nato French. According to Luftwaffe Deputy In-spector Lt Gen Helmut Heinz, the French Chief of Air Staff has agreed to study jointly an aircraft with dual-role capability, air-to-air primary and air-to-ground secondary.

Is Bonn worried that, after Tor-nado, Panavia could fade away? "We have put a lot of effort into Panavia and I would regret it if all the know-how and good co-operation were to be lost," says Defence Secretary Dr Karl Schnell. He believes that the political will exists.
The Germans recognise the differ-

Heading Artist's impression of the TKF90, new air-to-air fighter for the Luftwaffe in ten years' time

ences in requirements. The Luftwaffe's F-4s must be replaced in the air-to-air role after 1992; the RAF's Jaguars and Harriers must be replaced in the air-to-ground role seven years sooner. Gen Heinz says that TKF90 calls for "the highest efficiency in weapons and avionics," while the British and French are looking for a simpler, more exportable solution. Whatever is decided, says Schnell, "our next air-craft must be cheaper than Tornado." Heinz says that the TKF90 studies, including an analysis of the threat, will be given to the Defence Minister this month. "We have provided our allies with results of our studies, and the industry's inputs are assisting our analysis."
Luftwaffe planning chief Brig Gen Schwenke thinks that the ground-support mission has changed because of improved anti-air battlefield weapons like short-range missiles and anti-aircraft guns. The Army's need for air support has changed also with the development of "area" weapons. "So we think that the primary role is changing from close air-to-ground support to air-to-air^' This will be the main gap in the 1990s, with Tor-nado and Alpha Jet covering air-to-ground.

If the Europeans cannot harmonise,