

Far-right German police arrested for hoarding ammunition

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The arrest last week of four police officers in the East German state of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania confirms the existence of an extensive far-right network inside the German police and army (Bundeswehr), which is being covered up by the authorities.

Last Wednesday, the prosecutor of Schwerin, the state's capital, ordered a search of 13 homes and police departments and arrested four police officers. Three of those arrested are members of the Special Task Force (SEK) of the state criminal police (LKA), the fourth, a member of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD), Marko G., is a former SEK officer.

Ten thousand rounds of ammunition and an Uzi machine gun were found at the home of Marko G. The three active SEK policemen are said to have handed over the stolen cartridges to him. The four are now being investigated for violating the War Weapons Control Act and the Weapons Law, as well as for collective fraud.

The arrests raise a number of disturbing questions.

The house of Marko G. had already been searched for 11 hours in the autumn of 2017 by the GSG9 anti-terror unit of the federal police. At that time "a considerable amount of weapons and ammunition were found" to which Marko G. was not entitled, the Schwerin public prosecutor declared last week.

It was also revealed at the time that Marko G. was the founder and administrator of a chat group "Nordkreuz," which communicated via Messenger Telegram. The group of around 30 members were so-called "preppers," who were hoarding supplies and weapons and carrying out target practice in preparation for a "Day X", when a state crisis was expected to take place.

Two members of this chat group, the police officer and AfD member Haik J. and the lawyer and city parliament deputy Jan-Hendrik Hammer, were under investigation by the authorities on "suspicion of preparing a serious act of subversive violence." They were alleged to have regarded

an impending state crisis as an opportunity "to use their weapons to apprehend and kill representatives of the left-wing political spectrum," according to the 2017 judicial search warrant.

The searches, which focused on a total of six men, yielded 30,000 cartridges and a list of thousands of names and dates of political opponents. These include Left Party and Green Party state and federal politicians, representatives of refugee associations, of a workers' welfare organisation and of trade unions. However, only Haik J. and Hammer were charged, the other four, including Marko G., were assessed to be mere witnesses.

The case was reported in the media at that time. Marko G. even gave "Panorama," a news magazine on ARD public television, a detailed interview, in which he reported on the activities of the prepper group "Nordkreuz." He admitted that the group met for shooting practice, but denied any plans to kill political opponents.

Commenting on the composition of the group, Marko G said: "Everything from bankers to doctors and athletes. We have technicians, engineers, self-employed craftsmen, policemen." The group also included several army reservists.

Despite the weapons deposits found and the list of political opponents, the raid had no consequences for Marko G., who was not even subjected to a disciplinary procedure. He was able to continue his activities without harassment for another two years as well as his chat group, which is networked to far-right groups throughout Germany.

It is unclear why a second raid against Marko G., which led to his arrest, has taken place now. It is remarkable, however, that it took place just 10 days after the murder of the Kassel district president Walter Lübcke and three days before the arrest of his alleged murderer, Stefan E. Stefan E. is a neo-Nazi with a long criminal record and a

man with close links to far-right networks throughout Germany.

Is there a possible connection? Was Marko G. taken out of circulation before his contacts with circles involved in the Lübcke murder became known, thereby avoiding a scandal for the government in Schwerin and its interior minister Lorenz Caffier (CDU)?

Caffier has awarded Marko G. a certificate as a sport shooter and was a regular guest at a shooting range where the LKA organised training for special units of the police and the army. This shooting range has also been searched in the recent raids, because its manager is alleged to have been active in the Nordkreuz group. Despite requests from state politicians, Caffier also omitted to inform and warn the people whose names were included on the 2017 “hit list.”

Marko G. was networked nationwide. Nordkreuz was just one of several chat groups in which he exchanged views with like-minded far rightists. The main administrator of the network of chat groups was André S., a soldier attached to the KSK special forces army unit, who was also known as Hannibal.

André S. is the central figure in a far-right network of former and active Bundeswehr soldiers. Details of the network were published in the *Focus* magazine and *taz* newspaper last November. In terms of personnel and organisation, it relies on “Uniter,” an association of former elite soldiers founded by Hannibal in 2012. It maintains close relations with other parts of the state apparatus, including the military intelligence service (MAD), domestic intelligence agency as well as reservists, police officers, judges and other civil servants.

The right-wing extremist soldier Franco A. is said to have participated at least twice at meetings organised by Hannibal in the state of Baden-Württemberg. Franco A. had registered as a Syrian refugee in an apparent attempt to attack high-ranking politicians and personalities and then put the blame on refugees.

According to the *taz* newspaper, Marko G. also met Hannibal in person at a weapons fair in Nuremberg and near Schwerin. In early 2017, the two men discussed whether they could use Bundeswehr trucks on Day X to overcome roadblocks—and on the shootings to be carried out.

The *taz* has also exposed a direct connection between “Uniter” and the Baden-Württemberg State Office for the Protection of the Constitution (state intelligence agency, LfV) as well as an indirect connection to the far-right terrorist group, the National Socialist Underground, NSU.

State authorities have held a protective hand over this huge right-wing network in the police and army and have no interest in uncovering it. Schwerin Interior Minister Caffier claims up to this day that SEK officers involved in the Nordkreuz group are individual cases.

At the same time, soldiers and police officers who speak out against the far-right extremists are being victimised. One example is Sergeant Patrick J. who was due to be “dishonourably” dismissed from the Bundeswehr after he handed over to military intelligence a dossier of almost 150 pages with information on the right-wing activities of Bundeswehr soldiers.

Among other material, the 30-year-old lawyer had collected right-wing extremist statements from more than 100 of his comrades. He had also reported that one soldier had built a copy of Auschwitz concentration camp with Lego bricks, working together with fellow far rightists via Facebook. Military intelligence, however, concluded that his evidence was “exaggerated and groundless.”

The Bundeswehr Personnel Office sought to dismiss Patrick J. on the grounds that he lacked “suitable character.” Only after the affair became public did the defence ministry backtrack. It invited Patrick J. to a conversation and has suspended his dismissal “until further notice.”

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