

Police in Washington state seize cache of firearms from suspected Neo-Nazi leader

Kevin Reed**24 October 2019**

Officers from the Arlington and Seattle, Washington police departments recently used a red-flag law to seize a cache of firearms from Kaleb J. Cole, a suspected state leader of the neo-Nazi Atomwaffen Division (AWD).

Court documents shared by the King County prosecutor's office with the news media on October 17 revealed that a judge issued the order to seize the weapons on the grounds that, "Kaleb Cole poses a serious threat to public safety by having access and possession of firearms and a concealed pistol license."

While Cole was not arrested or charged with a crime, authorities used provisions of Washington State's Extreme Risk Protection Order (ERPO) or "red-flag law" to require that Cole surrender all firearms to the police for one year.

The court records said that police seized five military-style rifles, three pistols and other gun parts from a residence in Arlington last month. Why it took the prosecutor's office a month to report the weapon seizure as well as the fact that Cole has not been arrested remain unexplained. Efforts by news organizations to interview Cole have been unsuccessful.

The AWD is neo-Nazi organization founded in 2015 in the US. It has grown internationally with supporters in UK, Canada and the Baltic States. The group has a history of fascist political activity and violence including murders, planned terrorist attacks and other crimes. At least ten individuals connected to the AWD are either in prison or are facing charges for crimes committed in connection with neo-Nazi activity.

The Atomwaffen—German for atomic weapons—explicitly identify with Adolf Hitler and combine anti-Semitism and racism with dystopian politics. The AWD draws inspiration from James

Mason and Joseph Tommasi of the National Socialist Liberation Front as well as Charles Manson and his doomsday scenario "Helter Skelter." The group counts active duty US military personnel among its members.

In one instance, AWD member and US Marine Vasiliios Pistolis attended the "Unite the Right" fascist rampage in Charlottesville, Virginia on August 11-12, 2017 and was recorded chanting "White Lives Matter" and "You Will Not Replace Us" while carrying a torch. Pistolis boasted online after the event, "Today cracked 3 skulls open with virtually no damage to myself."

A profile of the fascist group published by the Southern Poverty Law Center says, "AWD is organized as a series of terror cells that work toward civilizational collapse. Members, who can be fairly described as accelerationists, believe that violence, depravity and degeneracy are the only sure way to establish order in their dystopian and apocalyptic vision of the world."

It is clear from the court records and news reports that federal authorities have been well aware of Cole's activities for more than a year. Among the court documents released to the media was a report that Cole travelled to Eastern Europe in December 2018 to honor Nazi crimes during World War II.

Photos found on Cole's smartphone after he was stopped by Customs and Border Patrol agents when reentering the US show him posing in front the Auschwitz death camp. Other photos show Cole holding up the AWD flag as well as firearms at other stops during his trip.

The report from Border Patrol said, "Cole has been permanently banned from entry into Canada as a result of his (admitted) membership/affiliation with the Atomwaffen Division." According to authorities, the delay in taking action against Cole was because the federal government lacked the authority to do so

without evidence of a crime being committed.

News reports also said that the FBI and police petitioned the Kent County court to seize Cole's weapons because he was believed to be the leader of AWD's cell in Washington state. The law enforcement agencies wrote that Cole had participated in recruitment and firearms training at "hate camps," where members participated in military-style drills, wore skull masks over their faces and, in one video, chanted anti-Semitic slurs and "race war now."

Online videos show AWD members firing guns and moving through rooms at "devils tower" in an abandoned cement plant near the northwestern Washington town of Concrete. When asked by reporters to comment on the surveillance of Cole, a spokesman for the Seattle FBI office refused comment.

Seattle City Attorney Pete Holmes told K5News in Seattle, "The fact is the federal government came to us. There's no other mechanism like our firearms unit that's in existence. There's no one else in the state that's doing this." The report stated further that this is the first time the FBI has sought an ERPO in Washington state and could be one of the first instances that such laws have been used in the US.

ERPO laws have been passed in a number of US states in response to the growth of suicides and "active shooter" massacres across the country. They provide law enforcement with the authority to "proactively intervene" in situations involving potential gun violence.

It would appear that the events in Seattle are something of a test case for the use of such laws which raise important constitutional questions related to both the Second and Fourth Amendment.

It is appropriate for the working class to approach this development with a degree of caution. It may well be the case—and not the first time nor the last—that the state is experimenting with undemocratic measures against the extreme right that will be used later on against the working class.



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