

Fascistic New Zealand soldier charged with disclosing military information

Tom Peters
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On January 21, the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) told the media that a soldier linked to fascist groups, who was arrested in December, has now been charged with unlawfully accessing a computer to disclose military information “likely to prejudice the security or defence of New Zealand.”

No further details have been officially released, including what the information was or who received it. The name of the 27-year-old man, who was based at Linton Military Camp, remains suppressed within New Zealand, meaning no media can identify him. No justification has been given for the name suppression.

The case raises disturbing questions, including whether the soldier had any contact with Christchurch terrorist Brenton Tarrant, who massacred 51 people and injured 49 in attacks on two mosques. The arrested soldier was reportedly questioned following the March 15, 2019 attacks, indicating that the NZDF knew about his fascist views. However, he was not dismissed from the army at the time.

Stuff reported on January 22 that the soldier used the pseudonym Johann Wolfe and was “a self-described co-founder of the white nationalist group the ‘Dominion Movement,’ which subscribed to the same identitarian politics as the March 15 terror suspect.” The Dominion Movement took down its website following the Christchurch shootings, but *Stuff* noted that shortly afterwards a “seemingly identical” organisation emerged called Action Zealandia.

The soldier is also reportedly a member of far-right “bodybuilding club” Wargus Christi, which frequently posted anti-Semitic, anti-Islamic and homophobic material on Facebook.

Like Tarrant’s manifesto, Action Zealandia (AZ) rails against the “replacement” of white people by non-white immigrants. The Christchurch shooter donated

thousands of dollars to similar identitarian groups in France and Austria. AZ recently vandalised the office of Chinese-born National Party MP Jian Yang with posters echoing the anti-Chinese propaganda peddled by supporters of the Labour Party-NZ First-Greens government.

“Johann Wolfe” is apparently well-known in extreme-right circles both in New Zealand and Australia. Speaking on a podcast run by Australian fascist group The Dingoes, in February 2019, he made racist statements about Maori and also declared that “China is taking over New Zealand” and “sending colonists here.” Like the Dominion Movement, The Dingoes removed its website after the March 15 massacre.

The revelation that a known fascist was allowed to serve for several years in the NZ military, with access to weaponry, should sound alarm bells. One report stated that the arrested soldier announced on social media he had “joined a Nazi organisation” in 2014, the same year he joined the Army. Internationally, as Tarrant indicated in his manifesto, the armed forces, police and other state agencies serve as incubators and protectors for extreme-right forces.

The charges against “Wolfe” follow an increase in fascist incidents in New Zealand. Soon after Action Zealandia’s vandalism of Yang’s office, the *Otago Daily Times* reported on January 16 that Bilal Barekzai, a former Afghan refugee who opened an auto-parts business in Milton last August, “had experienced more than 40 instances of property damage and theft, culminating in an alleged arson that engulfed several cars.”

Barekzai said the attacks were racially motivated and he had received a threat saying: “Your days are numbered here. We’ll burn your place fully down sooner or later and then we’ll come after your homes

and mosques.” Barezai complained that police had done nothing to prevent the attacks and “tried to downplay the seriousness of what’s been happening.”

Milton, a small town south of Dunedin, is the location of the Bruce Rifle Club where Tarrant trained with military-style guns before carrying out his massacre. Peter Breidahl, a hunter, went to police in late 2017 to report racist and violent language used by members of the club. Breidahl said police dismissed his complaint, telling him there was nothing to worry about.

On January 22, the Temple Sinai and the Jewish Progressive Congregation in Wellington were spray-painted with swastikas. “Events in New Zealand over the past year and beyond that has left us with a sense of insecurity and vulnerability,” Temple chair Matthew Smith told journalists from NZME publishing.

Fascists have been emboldened by the entire political establishment and much of the corporate media, which have for years demonised Muslims to justify New Zealand’s participation in the US-led wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The ruling Labour Party and its coalition partner, the nationalist NZ First, have encouraged anti-immigrant sentiment against Chinese and other Asian people, scapegoating them for the high cost of living and low wages. NZ First, supported by the trade union-backed *Daily Blog*, pro-US academic Anne-Marie Brady and much of the media, depicts China as a threat in the same way as Action Zealandia.

In the lead-up to the 2017 election, NZ First leader Winston Peters ranted at a meeting in Dunedin that Yang’s membership in the National Party left New Zealand “exposed to being a pawn of the Communists in China.” Peters backed unsubstantiated claims by Brady, whose work is funded by NATO and the Washington think tank the Wilson Centre, that Yang is a Chinese spy.

The anti-China campaign aims to align New Zealand more fully with the Trump administration’s trade war and military build-up against China. At the same time, xenophobia is being promoted to divide the working class and block any unified fight against social inequality, which has worsened under the Ardern government.

The government’s response to the Christchurch massacre has nothing to do with stopping the growth of the far-right. Ardern has exploited the atrocity to

campaign internationally for stronger censorship of social media. Her government has also used the Christchurch attack to justify increased funding for the intelligence agencies and arming the police in many parts of the country. The military is also being expanded, with billions of dollars in upgrades and more troops being recruited.

Internationally, the crisis of capitalism has produced a powerful wave of mass protests and strikes and led growing numbers of workers and young people to support the perspective of socialism. The ruling class is responding with ever-more authoritarian forms of rule and encouraging far-right forces, for which there is no mass support.

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