

German defence minister plans more effective organization of army's far-right elite force

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German Defence Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer (Christian Democratic Union, CDU) announced Tuesday that the 1,600-strong elite unit of the German army (Bundeswehr) would be restructured after new details came to light about the far-right terrorist networks operating for years inside the Special Forces Command (KSK).

One of the four companies of the KSK is to be disbanded, KSK participation in international missions temporarily suspended and the elite force is to be restructured and more closely integrated into the rest of the Bundeswehr.

The KSK had “in parts become a law unto itself,” Kramp-Karrenbauer explained. There was “a toxic leadership culture on the part of some individuals” and large amounts of weapons and ammunition had been lost. Some 48,000 rounds of ammunition and 62 kilograms of explosives had disappeared without trace. Therefore, “the KSK could not remain in its current form.”

The defence minister's move is primarily a damage control operation. The discredited right-wing extremist force is not to be disbanded, but rather organised more effectively and given more influence within the Bundeswehr as a whole. Not one of those responsible for encouraging and tolerating the activities of the far right over a long period of time is to be held accountable. On the contrary, they have been given responsibility for reorganising the KSK.

Kramp-Karrenbauer's proposal stems from a “KSK working group” she set up five weeks ago after a 45-year-old KSK instructor, Philipp Sch., had been arrested. Police found explosives, an arsenal with ammunition and Nazi literature following a search of the soldier's private home.

The “KSK working group” consists of the leading superiors of Philipp Sch.—KSK commander Markus Kreitmayr, army inspector Alfons Mais and Bundeswehr

inspector general Eberhard Zorn—as well as two state secretaries from the Defence Ministry, i.e., all defence and military insiders. In addition, the new military commissioner of the Bundestag, Eva Högl (Social Democratic Party, SPD), was included in the group. Högl has to demonstrate she is just as loyal to the Bundeswehr as her predecessor, Hans-Peter Bartels, whom she replaced a month ago in a dispute.

Brigadier General Kreitmayr, who has led the KSK for two years, is also responsible for implementing the announced “reforms.” The commander of the Rapid Forces Division, Major General Andreas Hannemann, is to investigate the whereabouts of the missing ammunition.

Hannemann recently featured in a video of the *Bild* newspaper, posing like an authoritarian military ruler. He openly threatened young people who had clashed with police in Stuttgart if they dared to “attack any one of us.” “We will fight back,” he said, emphasising several times: “If someone is unwilling to use force then he must not wear this uniform.”

Kramp-Karrenbauer, who informed the KSK personally about the measures planned at the KSK barracks in Calw, praised the unit in a subsequent interview with the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*: “I saw a unit that was shaken by what had taken place. A unit that questions itself critically. One had the feeling that there are people around commander Markus Kreitmayr ready to change the KSK.”

When asked by the *Süddeutsche* whether she would dissolve the entire company if “self-healing” did not succeed, the defence minister replied: “We will always need special forces. ... The KSK has performed excellently in all of its operations since 1996.”

In fact, the KSK operates largely in secret. Its operations have included interventions in the Bosnian and Afghanistan wars, where it hunted down and killed alleged terrorists behind front lines. Only those who

complete training lasting several years and pass various examinations testing the entrant's physical and psychological limits are accepted into the conspiratorial squad.

Far-right conspiracies have existed in the KSK from the start. One of its first commanders, Reinhard Günzel, was fired without notice by a former defence minister, Peter Struck (SPD), in 2003 after he expressed his support for a speech widely regarded as anti-Semitic by the former CDU and, later, far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) deputy Martin Hohmann. Günzel subsequently accused Struck in the far-right newspaper *Junge Freiheit* of organising his “exorcism” and trying to “wipe out the conservative camp.”

In April 2017, Lieutenant Colonel Pascal D., a senior KSK officer, celebrated a wild farewell party. One of those taking part was Philipp Sch., who has now been arrested. According to one witness, Nazi music was played at the party and those participating gave the raised arm Hitler salute. The matter was never fully clarified because investigators encountered a “wall of silence” from the 70 soldiers taking part.

The German military secret service (MAD) has since identified 20 suspected right-wing extremists in the KSK. It only dealt with cases which were obvious. Many soldiers who, according to MAD, also reject the German constitution (Basic Law) were not investigated. MAD itself is deeply involved in the extreme-right swamp and has repeatedly warned soldiers of impending investigations.

The notorious André S., alias “Hannibal,” is also a former instructor for the KSK. Hannibal had built up a nationwide network of far-right elite soldiers, police officers and judges, who were preparing to carry out a fascist coup on a certain “Day X” involving the murder of hundreds of political opponents.

Hannibal was also in contact with Bundeswehr officer Franco A., who was exposed in 2017 after acquiring a fake identity as a refugee. Franco A. is currently accused of “preparing a serious crime endangering the state”—i.e., the assassination of left-wing politicians, cultural figures and armed assaults on institutions.

Significantly, neither Kramp-Karrenbauer in her interview with the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, nor the report of the KSK working group even mentioned Hannibal, who, like Franco A., remains at large. Franco A.'s accomplice and close friend Maximilian T., also a former Bundeswehr soldier, even has an ID card to enter the Bundestag. He is an employee of AfD deputy Jan Nolte.

The cover-up operation and support for the far-right networks in the KSK, the Bundeswehr and other parts of the state apparatus by the German government and other representatives of the ruling elite are no accident. Confronted with growing international conflicts and internal class contradictions, which continue to worsen due to the coronavirus pandemic, the ruling class in Germany is returning to its methods of the 1930s—militarism and dictatorship.

The ruling elite needs the KSK, the Bundeswehr—in which many officers sympathise with the AfD—the secret services and other sections of the state apparatus, which are permeated with right-wing extremists, in order to pursue its imperialist goals abroad and suppress social opposition at home.

The *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, which frequently expresses the interests and goals of ruling circles more openly and cynically than other newspapers, summed this up in a comment by Reinhard Müller.

It was “always a crazy idea” to dissolve the KSK, “if this means doing without such special forces,” Müller wrote. While extremists could not be tolerated, it should not be forgotten, however, that “small, elite units that are particularly dependent on one another in secret operations require an esprit de corps and secrecy. If this is not the case, then there is a lack of clout and security.”

Politically, it was “not easy to hold onto those elite units that not only go through a tough selection and training process, but are also distinguished by a certain cultivation of tradition.” But that should not be “a contradiction: The citizen in uniform must be a warrior in an emergency.”

“Warriors” who are “distinguished by a certain cultivation of [Nazi] tradition”—that is a very precise description of the radical right-wing network in the KSK, the abolition of which would be a “crazy idea,” according to the newspaper that represents Germany's financial oligarchy based in the city of Frankfurt.



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