

Interior Minister in German state of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania forced to resign over ties to neo-Nazi network

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Lorenz Caffier, the Interior Minister in the German state of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, announced his resignation at a press conference last Tuesday after further details came to light about his connections to the right-wing extremist terrorist group Nordkreuz (Northern Cross), the northern division of the so-called “Hannibal network.” The Christian Democratic Union (CDU) politician had served as Interior Minister in the state for 14 years, making him one of the longest-serving politicians in Germany.

Research from the *TAZ* daily and *Der Spiegel* magazine revealed in the days leading up to his resignation that Caffier bought a Glock handgun in early 2018 from the right-wing extremist Frank T.—allegedly so he could go hunting. T. operates a shooting range in the city of Güstrow. According to *TAZ*’s research, T. was a member for several years of the Nordkreuz group, whose members hoarded weaponry seized from police and military stockpiles, maintained kill lists with up to 25,000 names and prepared to murder political opponents on “Day X.”

In 2019, Nordkreuz leader Marko G. was handed a suspended sentence after the discovery of an arms dump on his property with 60,000 rounds of munitions led to him being convicted under the Military Weapons Control Law. Parts of the hoard were traced to supplies used by police special units in seven German states, the federal police, the army and customs. Thousands of rounds were linked to Frank T. or his firm, “Baltic Shooters.”

The group, which includes several police officers from the special operations unit in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, also had an order list for 200 body bags and quicklime. Nordkreuz members continue to have access to this day to the Eurofighter squadron at the Rostock-Laage air base.

In a “‘Nordkreuz’ standard operating procedure” sent from Frank T. to Marko G. and now in the possession of ZDF television, it is stated, “The better the communication, the easier it will be to gather everyone on Day X. ... But until then, the main concern for all of us is to draw as little attention to ourselves as possible.”

Caffier told the press, “I bought a weapon from someone who, viewed from today’s standpoint, I should not have bought it from. But the purchase was not a mistake so much as the way I dealt with it. For that, I apologise.” At the same time, he bitterly attacked the media, accusing them of conducting “totally uninhibited reporting.” The accusation that he is close to far-right circles is “simply absurd.” Caffier intends to retain his seat in the

state parliament until the end of the legislative session next year.

Frank T., who sold the weapon to Caffier, has worked closely with the Interior Minister for many years and is a leading private trainer of professional shooters at the international level. Between 2004 and 2012, he won 42 German championship titles in various shooting categories.

The shooting magazine *Caliber* devoted a report to him in 2018 in which he was described as a “talented all-rounder.” Over a dozen pictures showed him performing various shooting exercises, including one in the presence of Caffier. The article included T. “among the few civilians in Germany who provide shooting practice lessons to elite military units and the police,” and acknowledged that T. has “trained ... the crème de la crème of the elite units.” With his firm “Baltic Shooters,” T. has organised at his Güstrow shooting range since 2004 “competitions in dynamic shooting,” including “events with well over 200 participants from all major countries.”

One of these events is the annual three-day-long “Special Forces Workshop,” in which teams from various special forces units have participated since 2011, including teams from the GSG-9, EKO Cobra from Austria, SWAT teams from the US, soldiers from Germany’s KSK special forces, special operations commandos and police officers. There are also regular representatives from Heckler & Koch, Rheinmetall, Ruag and “other high-ranking exhibitors from the weapons industry.” Pictures from the civil war-style “workshop” show combat situations amid destroyed cars, hostage taking and other street-fighting scenarios.

Caffier, whose Interior Ministry contracted Frank T. to hold this event, was also its personal patron each year from 2011 to 2018.

T. also boasted openly about his “relations with the authorities.” He told *Caliber* in an interview, “I had the tremendous luck in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania to find authorities that were very open and willing to extend me trust, a tolerant director of the state bureau of criminal police [*Landeskriminalamt*, LKA], and particularly an Interior Minister who was always willing to listen.” The LKA director referred to is Ingolf Mager, who Caffier redeployed to the state intelligence agency following the raids against G. and his accomplices in the special operations police units.

A report in the special forces-aligned publication SEK Einsatz about the 2016 competition stated that “the 14 different

workshops” were prepared by Frank T. “in close collaboration with the state office of criminal police [LKA] and the special forces commandos [SEK] Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania.”

The inspector of the police in the state, Wilfried Kapischke, expressed his “pride” and “support,” while Interior Minister Caffier travelled to the event “to thank all participants personally for their important work.” Caffier and Frank T. were also seen in a picture together at this event.

In a recent interview with *Der Spiegel*, Caffier claimed he had bought the weapon “unsuspectingly” because in 2018 there was allegedly “no ... suggestion of Frank T. having contacts to right-wing extremists.” This is a lie. In reality, searches by the federal office of criminal police against Nordkreuz leader Marko G. took place in August 2017. G. was working for T. as a shooting instructor at the time.

At the same time, the state criminal police office in Mecklenburg Western-Pomerania was informed as early as 2017 about the Nordkreuz chats, according to an answer from the federal government to a request for information from the Left Party. Messages between G. and T. cited in a *TAZ* article in April leave no doubt about T.’s right-wing extremist outlook. The LKA and state intelligence service, both of which received files from the federal police bureau investigating the case in March 2018, are overseen by the Interior Minister.

The connections between Frank T. and the Nordkreuz terrorist suspects are well known. Marko G. was not only regularly hired as a trainer in shooting at the Güstrow site, but leading Nordkreuz members Haik J. and Jan Hendrik H. were “regularly at the shooting range with co-thinkers,” wrote *Der Spiegel*. Senior criminal police commissioner Haik J., an AfD (extreme right Alternative for Germany) member, and the lawyer Jan Hendrik H. were responsible for maintaining the death lists.

According to media reports, Jan Hendrik H. hosted a shooting competition for up to 40 Nordkreuz members every February 25. The title was dubbed the “Mehmet-Turgut cup,” named after the food vendor killed by the National Socialist Underground (NSU) terrorist group on that day. H. was a member of the liberal Free Democrats (FDP) until 2015 and sat in the Rostock senate until 2017.

Research by ZDF and the *TAZ* identify the civil war training involving the special forces, over which Caffier presided until 2018, as the key location for the exchange of weapons from across the country. This was also the original source of the arms dump maintained by Marko G. A stolen Uzi machine gun belonging to the army was removed from the armoured grenadier battalion where G. was serving in 1993.

The guns and rounds of ammunition secured at G.’s are only a small portion of the weaponry that has “gone missing” from the army over recent years. According to official figures, the following is currently unaccounted for: 60 kilograms of nitropenta explosives (PETN), 74,161 munitions of diverse calibres, eight assault rifles (G36), 11 rapid-fire guns (G3), six machine guns (MG3), five pistols (P8), two mobile rocket-launchers, a machine gun pistol (Mp7), eight signal pistols, 30 MG-3 rounds, eight gun barrels (WS Tornados), and 23 explosive devices. According to statements of Nordkreuz members presented in court, the Hannibal

group now has “found close to 2,000 co-thinkers” and built up “a wide-ranging network across Europe.”

As the *World Socialist Web Site* has explained, the government, working through the domestic intelligence agency (*Verfassungsschutz*) and military intelligence agency (MAD), is systematically endeavouring to cover up the existence of this shadow army within the German state apparatus, and protect central figures within the Hannibal network from the public eye.

When in September this year “internal police investigations” led to two police officers being suspended for their involvement in right-wing extremist chat groups, Caffier asserted that a right-wing extremist network is “not to be found.” The officers “knew each other from joint training sessions” and were “rotten apples on an otherwise healthy tree.” Responding to press inquiries from the *TAZ* and ZDF, Caffier’s Interior Ministry remained silent for years and ultimately banned journalist Dirk Laabs from the premises.

Minister President Manuela Schwesig (Social Democratic Party, SPD), in whose government Caffier remained Interior Minister and Deputy Minister President until his resignation, consistently remained silent when asked about Nordkreuz.

At the same time, critical politicians, state prosecutors and journalists who investigated or criticised the Nordkreuz complex received death threats. In early May, two deputies in the federal parliament and two deputies from state parliaments in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania and Bavaria, a state prosecutor from Schwerin, nine editorial offices and one lawyer’s office in Berlin each received a death threat by mail that said, “We have enough ammunition to dispose of each of you with a head shot.” As one of the state parliament deputies, Dirk Friedriszik (SPD), confirmed, all of those to whom the threat was sent were “working on ‘Nordkreuz’ and its associates.”

Friedriszik, who is also a member of the NSU parliamentary commission and has also collaborated with the ZDF journalist Laabs, announced in September that he would no longer stand as a candidate for the state parliament. There had been “hardly any investigation” by the state government or the authorities into the “numerous demonisations and threats” against him or the shots fired at his house. Therefore, after “long deliberations and discussions with the family,” he had made his decision. He told the *Nordkurier* newspaper, “On my greatest concern, the struggle against the right, I stand alone in my parliamentary group in a wide open field.”

On Wednesday evening, Minister President Schwesig thanked Caffier “for his political work for the state” and “trustworthy cooperation.” Caffier’s successor is set to be confirmed this week. He is Torsten Renz, the head of the CDU parliamentary group in the state parliament. Renz has been a member of the district council and city council of Güstrow, the centre of the Nordkreuz network, since 1999.



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