

Neo-Nazi arms networks spreading across Europe

Anthony Torres
20 January 2021

In the weeks before and since Donald Trump's January 6 fascist coup attempt in Washington, neo-Nazi circles were trafficking large quantities of weapons in Europe. Stockpiles of weapons seized by police give an idea of the intense paramilitary activity of extreme right-wing forces across the continent. Some are tied directly to senior officials sitting in office.

On Wednesday, January 13, the Paris Banditry Repression Brigade of the police made one of the largest ever national weapons seizures in France. The case involved serving and retired military personnel. They are believed to have supplied weapons to fascist or neo-Nazi groups. A stockpile described as "out of the ordinary," containing pistols, revolvers, assault rifles, automatic pistols, ammunition and gunpowder, was seized in the search. The investigation is still underway, but sources close to the case have referred to over a ton of material.

According to *Le Figaro*, ballistic investigations will be used to determine whether the weapons were used in a settling of scores tied to drug deals. The newspaper added: "The network is suspected of having supplied arms to drug traffickers but also to ultra-right-wing sympathizers, sources close to the case have indicated."

The judicial police of Paris have arrested 10 people in the Ile-de-France region surrounding the city and in the east and south of France, including two soldiers, one currently employed by the Ministry of Defense, and the other currently stationed at a base in eastern France. There was also a weapons enthusiast sympathizing with the extreme right and another person on state watchlists because of his fascist ties. Also arrested were three retired soldiers, who had gone to work in the private sector, including a high-ranking officer and a former security official.

However, seizures of "non-standard" weapons of this

kind, involving neo-Nazi circles, are expanding throughout Europe.

In mid-December, 100,000 cartridges, 100 firearms, explosives including hand grenades, drugs and cash, and objects of the Wehrmacht (the army of the Nazi regime) were seized in Austria. The stockpile was intended to "set up an extreme right-wing network" in Germany, Austrian Interior Minister Karl Nehammer said at a press conference in Vienna.

In Spain on December 29, Malaga's Civil Guard, acting as part of Operation Nongreta, dismantled an international network involved in arms trafficking. A total of 160 firearms were seized, 121 of which were short weapons, along with 22 assault rifles and 8 machine guns. Nearly 10,000 cartridges were also found for different calibers, eight silencers, 273 magazines, and one and a half kilos of military explosives.

Two of those arrested were of German origin, known for their links to neo-Nazi movements; the other was British.

The fact that an employee of the French Ministry of Defense was involved in the trafficking operation only underscores the close links between neo-Nazi armed networks and the armies or paramilitary forces of the European states.

In Germany, according to a Bundeswehr report published in August 2020, at least 60,000 cartridges have gone missing since 2010. The Ministry of Defense reported that the location of 48,000 cartridges and 62 kilograms of explosives belonging to the German special forces KSK is unknown. This unit is known for its links with extreme right-wing networks, which have penetrated it to recruit members to a network led by an ex-KSK member named André S, who has prepared lists of political figures to be assassinated inside

Germany.

When asked about this, Tobias Lindner, the Green spokesman for Security Policy in the Bundestag, was forced to admit, “As such, there should be no loss of ammunition if everyone in the Bundeswehr respected the existing regulations. We are probably dealing with a mixture of negligence and sometimes criminal activity.”

Le Monde wondered lamely about the purposes for which the weapons seized in France could have been intended. “The facts have yet to be determined by the police investigation underway, but for some of those questioned, the question arises as to whether these weapons could have been used to supply, in some time frame yet to be established, a plan for violent action.”

It is not credible to assert that the “out of the ordinary” seizures of neo-Nazi weapons stockpiles in Europe, a few weeks before the first fascist coup attempt in American history, are a coincidence. Across Europe, fascist networks with connections at the top of the state apparatus are developing and consolidating stockpiles of weapons. It must be assumed that while some of these weapons have been seized by the police; others are not. These can be used for assassinations or political provocations of all kinds.

In the face of the crisis of world capitalism, the capitalist state apparatus feels itself increasingly besieged by popular opposition to its policy of “herd immunity” and austerity. Sections of the state are beginning to arm fascist gangs violently hostile to the working class. The “out of the ordinary” quantities of weapons available to the far right make clear that an event akin to Trump’s attempted coup could take place in Europe.

Trump’s failed attempt involved sections of the military, police, the Republican Party and the presidential office, who wanted to prevent the counting of votes and acceptance of Biden’s victory on Capitol Hill. The neo-Nazi rioters were found armed, some of them with hand ties to take hostages among the deputies. The attempted putsch was enthusiastically welcomed by European fascist circles, such as the Spanish fascist party Vox and its supporters among Spanish army officers.

In France, after Macron hailed the fascist dictator Pétain as a “great soldier” at the start of the “yellow vests” movement in 2017, former General Pierre de

Villiers has been agitating for military rule. In Spain, retired and serving officers have written to the king asking him to support them against the Socialist Party-Podemos government. They call for the murder of “26 million people,” the number of left-wing voters in Spain, according to them.

In Germany, neo-Nazi networks have drawn up lists of politicians to be executed by death squads. In 2019, conservative politician Walter Lübcke was murdered by a neo-Nazi fanatic following death threats against him by far-right networks due to his actions supporting migrants. The accomplices of the murderer, Stephan Ernst, were released.

In the United States, an extreme right-wing network linked to the Trump administration planned to kidnap several governors and execute them. The FBI also prepared notes that armed groups could carry out acts in 50 American states during Biden’s inauguration today.

Like the coup attempt in Washington, events in Europe are a warning that capitalist democracy is rotting on its feet. The only way to defend democratic rights and to put an end to the policies of austerity and “herd immunity” is to build a strong international movement in the working class for socialism, and against capitalism, nationalism and fascism.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact