Germany's defence ministry protects fascist networks in the armed forces

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Last weekend, Defence Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer (Christian Democratic Union, CDU) expressed her "fundamental confidence" in Germany's Special Forces Command (KSK). She announced that the secretive fighting unit would not be disbanded despite a long string of far-right scandals and serious weapons offences.

"In an organization like the Bundeswehr [Armed Forces]," she said, right-wing extremists can never be "ruled out in absolutely every instance," even more so "in the special forces." She has arranged for the command to be sent back to Afghanistan to "secure" the redeployment of German troops there.

By deciding to leave the KSK largely untouched, the defence minister is protecting the fascist networks that have developed within the force. Extensive stockpiles of ammunition and explosives, which are said to have been funneled toward a nationwide fascist network that recruits members from across the state and security apparatus and is preparing for a violent coup on a "Day X," disappeared from the KSK and other special units.

Given detailed witness statements and press research that painted a picture of a "shadow army" in May 2020, the Defence Ministry felt compelled to convene a "KSK task force," which was officially charged with investigating "right-wing extremist ties" within the elite unit. The "task force" is comprised of KSK Commander Markus Kreitmayr, Germany's most senior military brass; Inspector General Eberhard Zorn, as well as Defence Commissioner Eva Högl (Social Democratic Party, SPD). In reality, it served to shield the unit, along with its armed parallel structures, from the critical gaze of the public.

For example, Kreitmayr, who was supposed to take action against those in possession of the unit's "lost" war materiel, instead ordered an illegal "ammunition amnesty" under which KSK soldiers could hand over privately stashed Bundeswehr stocks without fearing any consequences. The public only learned of this by chance during the trial of one of the soldiers involved, who maintained an underground weapons cache. In March, his two-year sentence was suspended.

Although criminal and military investigations are underway against the KSK commander because of the amnesty measure, Kreitmayr will not be suspended but will assume a new leadership position "in rotation." His successor as KSK head will be Brigadier General Ansgar Meyer, who currently commands the German contingent of NATO's "Resolute Support" mission in Afghanistan.

That Kreitmayr's blatant attempt to obstruct justice was only the tip of the iceberg is borne out by other details that have come to light recently. According to a report by *Redaktionsnetzwerk Deutschland*, the possibility of returning the stolen ammunition without punishment "was evidently known in the Defence Ministry (BMVg) at least since last summer."

The Bundestag (federal parliament), however, was not informed of this. "The Inspector-General personally deleted the relevant passage in the report to the parliamentarians," according to TV news show Tagesschau.

The working group's "final report," signed by Inspector General Zorn and published early last week, now claims that "more than 90 percent" of the defence minister's "60 measures" announced last summer have "already been implemented" and that "comprehensive structural changes" have been implemented that are "effectively tantamount to a reorganization of this unit."

The *World Socialist Web Site* commented on the alleged "reform measures" at the time. It stated: "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."

This assessment has since been fully confirmed. For example, the Bundeswehr website states that "exchanges of the KSK with special forces of other branches of the armed forces and the police as well as international exchange in training" should be "specifically promoted" in the future. However, research by broadcaster ZDF suggests that it was precisely such regular "exchanges with other special

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forces," which, under the auspices of politicians, benefited the development of the nationwide terrorist networks.

As for the grandiloquent announcement of the "disbanding" of a KSK company in which the right-wing extremist activities were particularly comprehensively documented, this turns out to be a mere regrouping. On its website, the Bundeswehr explains that the "formal dissolution" of the company was not connected with the suspension and disarmament of its members but was the prelude to "personnel decisions" that could include "transfers out of the unit or to another area of the KSK."

In parallel with these manoeuvres, the Military Counterintelligence Service (MAD), which reports directly to the Defence Ministry, also established a "working focus" on the KSK and was given broad powers to monitor telecommunications. The ministry thus strengthened the authority under whose eyes the armed command structures had developed: both Robert P. alias "Petrus" (a KSK soldier and administrator of the far-right "Nord" chat group), and André S. alias "Hannibal" (a former KSK instructor and alleged head of the group) were, at least temporarily, "informants" of the military intelligence service.

In 2018, MAD agent and former KSK soldier Peter W. had to stand trial on suspicion of having warned his informant, "Hannibal," about the ongoing investigations against the latter's network. At the time, Peter W. was also acting as an official "contact person" for the investigating Federal Prosecutor General and the Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA).

In June 2020, various media outlets finally reported that eight KSK soldiers were regularly provided with information about the trial of their comrade by at least one MAD agent. "The head of evaluation at MAD" had "passed on internal documents from ongoing investigations to a KSK soldier," who had subsequently forwarded them, Tagesschau reported.

Such an approach is standard practice for a secret service whose annual report unapologetically describes its task as protecting Bundeswehr soldiers in contact with suspected right-wing extremists "from unjustified suspicion."

That the KSK, riddled with right-wing extremists and intelligence operatives, is again being deployed to Afghanistan, the country where it was used to torture and murder people, speaks volumes.

The unit was the first German force to set foot on Afghan soil in 2001 as part of "Operation Enduring Freedom." Just weeks later, KSK soldiers allegedly physically abused Murat Kurnaz, who was born and raised in Bremen, Germany, at a US airbase in Kandahar province before transferring him to the torture chambers at Guantánamo, where he was subsequently detained without charge for five years with the knowledge of the German government.

American special forces who then collaborated with the KSK in "processing" so-called "capture-or-kill" lists later reported hearing "music from World War II" at the German troops' debauched drinking parties.

Significantly, on 1 September, outgoing KSK Commander Kreitmayr will take over the post of head of training at the Armed Forces Base, previously held by Brigadier General Georg Klein. Klein, who in turn was promoted within the Armed Forces Base Command, is responsible for the Bundeswehr's bloodiest war crime to date.

In 2009, the then Bundeswehr colonel, working closely with members of the KSK, ordered the bombing of two tanker trucks in Afghanistan's Kunduz province, resulting in the deaths of between 100 and 140 people, including many children of primary school age. As documents obtained by Wikileaks later showed, the operational command knew in advance "that the bombing would result in numerous deaths and injuries without adequate action being taken immediately before and after the incident."

Kramp-Karrenbauer's rehabilitation of the KSK sends an alarm. In the face of growing social tensions, the ruling layers need such forces and methods to enforce their interests abroad and at the same time to suppress growing resistance at home.

As early as 2017, former KSK Commander and Brigadier General Dag Baehr publicly described a "KSK deployment at home" as a scenario that urgently needed to be rehearsed. In June 2020, a whistleblower reported that soldiers in the unit were ordered by superiors to write essays about a "KSK deployment inside the country." Last month, a former Bundeswehr colonel who "helped build" the KSK, according to a report by broadcaster ZDF, appeared at an anti-lockdown demonstration in the capital and declared that "the KSK should be sent to Berlin for a change" to "clean things up properly."

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