

Terrorist networks in the German army: Federal prosecutor general orders the arrest of two ex-officers

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26 October 2021

Far-right terrorist networks remain active within the German army (Bundeswehr) and its immediate environment. This was underlined by the arrest of two former Bundeswehr paratroopers by criminal police officers last Wednesday.

According to the news magazine *Der Spiegel*, Prosecutor General Peter Frank accuses the two persons arrested, Arend-Adolf G. and Achim A., of serious criminal offences. The charges range from conspiracy to murder, hostage-taking, planning crimes against humanity, to suspicion of founding a terrorist organisation.

The two former elite soldiers are said to have prepared the setting up of a mercenary force of 100 to 150 men, whose services they offered to the Saudi Arabian regime as shock troops in the Saudis' bloody war in Yemen. According to *Der Spiegel*, these accusations stem from a tip given by a former Bundeswehr soldier to the Military Counter-Intelligence Service (MAD) and have been confirmed by the evaluation of numerous chats and the monitoring of more than two dozen telephone connections.

The case is explosive not only because recruiting German nationals as mercenaries for a foreign power carries heavy prison sentences. There are also close links between the mercenary ring and right-wing extremist networks planning terrorist attacks within Germany.

Arend-Adolf G. and Achim A. are said to have worked for the security company Asgaard after their service time in the Bundeswehr, with G., on occasion, working as Asgaard's managing director. The company, which among other things was active in the Somali civil war and Iraq, where it guarded the Saudi Arabian embassy, specifically recruits members from special units of the Bundeswehr and the police, promising them monthly

salaries in five figures.

Asgaard not only maintains close relations with German state security forces, but also with right-wing extremist networks and apparently serves as a link between the two. A year ago, *Der Spiegel* and the ARD television magazine Kontraste reported on Asgaard's corporate culture, which glorifies National Socialism and the German army (Wehrmacht) under Hitler. The magazine also gave details of the right-wing extremist network in contact with the Asgaard director Dirk Gassmann. Among other things, *Der Spiegel* published a video showing Asgaard glorifying the fascist tradition of the Wehrmacht in its Iraqi company premises. WSWs reported on the incident at the time.

In the summer of 2020, former and active police officers and soldiers who, based on their postings on social media, clearly identified themselves as extreme right-wing, took part in a meeting at Asgaard's headquarters in Hamm. Among the participants was 41-year-old Thomas S., who at the time headed an investigation team in the Frankfurt police while also working as a leading functionary for Asgaard.

Shortly afterwards, the Frankfurt public prosecutor's office opened "an investigation into Thomas S. on suspicion of bribery as well as violation of official secrecy." In addition to "unauthorised secondary employment for a private security company" (suspected of being under the influence of right-wing extremism), the prosecutor's office accused him of "unlawful queries from police databases." It is not clear whether this is the same data retrieved from Hesse police computers that became the basis of numerous threatening letters sent by the sender "NSU 2.0."

According to *Der Spiegel*, the federal prosecutor general is currently investigating "a senior employee" of

Asgaard on suspicion of threatening to kill Martina Renner, a parliamentary deputy of the Left Party. Renner, among other things, had been involved in the committee set up in the state of Thuringia to investigate the activities of the far-right terrorist National Socialist Underground (NSU).

In April this year, the *Tagesspiegel* newspaper reported on links between a federal criminal police bodyguard and Asgaard. Once again, there existed a right-wing extremist background. The Berlin public prosecutor's office is investigating three federal police officers (BKA) belonging to the unit "Foreign and Special Operations" after they gave Hitler salutes at an internal party, and spread racist chats. One of these officers is also said to have worked for Asgaard.

Tagesspiegel also indicated possible links between the BKA officers and the right-wing "prepper," or survivalist, group "Nordkreuz," which hoarded ammunition and drew up assassination lists for left-wing political figures, opponents on a so-called Day X. The BKA officers had taken part in shooting exercises at a site in Güstrow where Nordkreuz was also active.

In May, MDR television reported that Germany's domestic intelligence agency (Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, BfV) and Military Counter-Intelligence Service (MAD) were investigating links between Asgaard and a former member of the Bundeswehr paramilitary unit, the KSK. It is being examined "whether he is part of a suspected right-wing extremist network with links to the unit." The Ministry of Defence informed the Bundestag's Defence Committee about this investigation at a secret meeting. A total of 59 people—mostly Bundeswehr reservists, but including some active soldiers with links to Asgaard, are currently being investigated by the BfV and MAD.

The fact that the Federal Prosecutor's Office now feels obliged to arrest two former soldiers who worked for Asgaard indicates the extent of the far-right conspiracy. As always, the authorities only act when so much has leaked out to the public that they can no longer remain inactive without completely discrediting themselves.

But then, as usual, the matter is covered up as quickly as possible and swept under the rug. This was the case with the right-wing extremist Bundeswehr officer Franco A., who assumed a false identity as a refugee, hoarded weapons and planned a terrorist attack in collaboration with right-wing extremist forces in the elite KSK troop and the nationwide "Hannibal" network, to which the Nordkreuz group belongs.

The BfV, MAD, BKA, the German Ministries of Defence and the Interior, all have a record of penetration by far-right networks and have repeatedly suppressed information to protect such extremist forces. Although the extent and dangers arising from far-right networks are known and documented, those responsible remain largely unchallenged or remain at large.

Franco A., who was long since released from pre-trial detention, is being tried in Frankfurt, four years after his activities were uncovered. The trial is expected to drag on into next year. The court had originally refused to open the trial at all and had to be forced to do so by a higher court. Now the entire process is increasingly developing into a farce.

The favourable treatment of far-right criminals stands in sharp contrast to the ruthless persecution of left-wing demonstrators, for example those arrested for protesting against the G20 summit in Hamburg, and has social roots. Faced with rapidly growing class antagonisms and the declining influence of all the established parties, the German ruling class is increasingly relying on state repression and fascist violence to suppress social resistance.

A century ago, during the Weimar Republic, paramilitary organisations and extreme right-wing forces, which later formed the basis of the Nazi regime, were under the special protection of the state. Hitler himself spent just a few months in prison following his attempt at a bloody coup d'état. While in prison he was able to write *Mein Kampf* and enjoy regular visits from a host of his admirers. The treatment of the pacifist and leftist Carl von Ossietzky was very different. Arrested following Hitler's assumption of power in 1933, he disappeared behind bars for criticising the military. The ruling circles in Germany are returning to precisely these traditions in the face of the current profound crisis of capitalism.



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