



Militancy/Terrorism



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Germany Alert (UPDATE): German-US far-right link revealed following December Saxony officials' assassination plot, per January 12 reports; highlights growing far-right convergence

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- According to January 12 reports, an investigation into the far-right December 15, 2021, assassination plot against Saxony's state Prime Minister Michael Kretschmer revealed links to the US-based neo-Nazi network "MZWNEWS."
- Instructions for the founding of far-right militant cells, attack plots, as well as the procurement of explosives were reportedly shared between "MZWNEWS" and "Dresden Offline-Vernetzung," the group behind the Saxony plot through the Telegram cloud-based instant messaging service.
- Following the revelation, German Interior Minister Nancy Faeser threatened to block the Telegram platform if it continues to refuse to comply with German laws. Further, she stated that Germany will discuss how to regulate the platform with its EU partners, which it claims is popular with far-right groups, anti-'vaxxer' activists, and a marketplace for illicit narcotics and arms trafficking.

Assessments & Forecast

1. That instructions for the assassination attempt against Saxony officials were directed through a US-based group emphasizes the increasing collaboration between far-right groups in the USA and Germany. This is evidenced by Germany currently having the largest overseas support base for the US far-right conspiracy movement “QAnon,” having merged with German far-right groups, including ‘Reichsbürger’, which rejects the modern German state. As a result, US right-wing extremists have increasingly become models for far-right German activists, including the so-called “Great Reset,” a conspiracy theory holding that elites engineered COVID-19 to control the global economy. This is supported by the distrust of scientific expertise that has forged unlikely coalitions, such as Querdenken, a protest movement that has brought together varying groups against health regulations, similar to those in the USA.
2. **FORECAST:** In 2022, the COVID-19 pandemic will continue to fuel political extremism, various far-right conspiracy theories, and the polarization of the German public, in turn heightening the threat posed by the far-right in Germany. This is reflected in German authorities issuing arrest warrants against 358 far-right extremists in 2021 compared to 94 in 2020.
3. This phenomenon is further associated with the increasing calls by the far-right in Germany for an “armed uprising” against government institutions and the assassination of high-ranking officials, referred to as “Day X,” which echoes conspiratorial, anti-government rhetoric propagated in the USA. This is further supported by the attempted storming of the Bundestag building on August 29, 2020, which was reportedly incited by rumors that former President Donald Trump was in Berlin and urged Germans to show QAnon’s “American hero” of their readiness to “take national authority.”
4. **FORECAST:** With far-right groups increasingly becoming loosely coordinated networks where members inspire and challenge each other to orchestrate violent acts and the procurement of weapons and explosives, these hold the potential to develop into genuine public threats in the near-to-medium term. This is especially the case when violence against political officials is legitimized in response to an alleged threat from the government. Given precedent and with far-right activists in Germany having shifted to adopting a persecuted “unvaxed minority” stance, incidents are likely to predominantly remain isolated attacks on COVID-19-related facilities, government buildings, and officials in the near future.
5. **FORECAST:** Given that “MZWNEWS” and “Dresden Offline-Vernetzung” communicated through online forums that increasingly promote conspiracy theories and extremist propaganda, authorities are likely to bolster online surveillance of such platforms to thwart potential attacks. Additionally, given that previous requests to remove content promoting extremism and violence have reportedly been ignored and with Telegram having no representative office in Germany, authorities are likely to resort to regulatory measures, including fines, near-term, while blocking the service as a last resort.

Recommendations

1. Travel to Germany may continue as per government guidelines while maintaining heightened vigilance of the increased threat of potential attacks by far-right extremists region-wide.
2. Maintained heightened vigilance at all protests and other political gatherings due to the potential for unrest and violent escalation.
3. Public, private, and third sector organizations are advised to increase their awareness of threats on social media through the use of threat monitoring services. Increased awareness of an organization’s political footprint and perceptions from fringe online groups can help uncover potential violent actors and plots before they occur.
4. Alert authorities immediately upon witnessing suspicious items or behavior.