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Army general to lead Germany's coronavirus crisis response team

Major General Carsten Breuer, the commander of the German army's (Bundeswehr) Territorial Tasks Command, has been appointed head of the coronavirus crisis response team of the future German government. His appointment was announced early on Monday. The crisis team is to be set up this week, although the confirmation and swearing-in of the "traffic light" coalition of the Social Democratic Party, Greens and Free Democratic Party are not due until next week.



Two-star General Carsten Breuer (Photo: KdoTA Presse / CC BY-SA 4.0)

The decision to put an active Bundeswehr general in charge of the COVID-19 crisis team permits only one conclusion: the traffic light coalition does not regard the pandemic as a medical problem, but rather as a security issue.

The purpose of the crisis team is not to protect the population from the virus, but to protect the government from the population. The incoming German government is preparing to declare a state of emergency in order to suppress resistance to its policy based on sacrificing countless lives to ensure increased profits and share prices. It is a policy that plays Russian roulette with the health of an entire generation of children and adolescents.

Major General Breuer has not the slightest medical or virological expertise. What he does bring to the job is decades of experience drawn from international combat missions, and leading command bodies of the Bundeswehr, NATO, the Ministry of Defence and domestic military operations.

Born in 1964, Breuer commenced his military career 36 years ago immediately after graduating from high school. He was trained at various Bundeswehr institutions, the German Army University in Hamburg and a general staff course in the US. He went onto command units in missions in Kosovo and Afghanistan. From 2008 to 2010, he held a leading command post with NATO in Brussels.

Between his various assignments as a troop commander, Breuer was repeatedly appointed to the Ministry of Defence. In 2015, he led the revision of the “2016 White Paper on Security Policy and the Future of the Bundeswehr” for the Ministry headed at that time by Ursula von der Leyen (CDU).

In addition to proposals for massive rearmament and the expansion of the Bundeswehr’s foreign missions, the White Paper advocated the deployment of the Bundeswehr for domestic purposes. The German post-war constitution had set narrow limits to the domestic use of the military due to the disastrous role of the military in the German Empire, the Weimar Republic and the Nazi dictatorship. The revised White Paper demanded that the Bundeswehr “also perform sovereign tasks using powers of intervention and coercion” during domestic missions—i.e., that it could arrest and search people like the police.

Since the beginning of 2018, Breuer, as commander of the Territorial Tasks Command, has been personally responsible for the Bundeswehr's domestic operations, which have been massively expanded since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic.

According to the Bundeswehr, there are currently 8,000 soldiers available for pandemic duties, of which 3,950 are currently deployed. Although these troops often perform logistical, medical or administrative tasks, the main aim for those in charge is to accustom the population to the use of the military in all spheres of society.

At the start of the pandemic the WSWS had already warned: "But regardless of how much medical assistance the army actually provides, the deployment serves another goal. Leading generals are openly declaring that the key issue is imposing military-police control over the population and defending the institutions of the capitalist state."

According to a report in the magazine *Der Spiegel* at the time, the Green Party-CDU coalition in the state of Baden-Württemberg had already considered "officially declaring a state of emergency and calling in the Bundeswehr because of the catastrophic staffing levels in the police force."

In a guest article for *Der Spiegel*, the FDP politician Marco Buschmann, who is due to be sworn in as Minister of Justice next week, warned at the time of revolutionary uprisings: "The small amount of time bought by the state, society and the economy at an enormous price, will soon run out. ... Then at some point revolution will be in the air."

The appointment of General Breuer as head of the coronavirus crisis response team confirms the warnings of the WSWS. The SPD, Greens and FDP are determined to continue the irresponsible "profits before lives" policy of the previous government and anticipate massive resistance.

On November 18, based on their majority in the Bundestag, they passed a new version of the Infection Protection Act, which massively restricts the measures needed to combat the pandemic. Although 100,000 people had already died from COVID-19, the explosive rise of the fourth wave of infection was unmistakable and scientists warned urgently of a catastrophe, they did not deviate from their course.

They refused to extend the existing “epidemic situation of national scope” and shifted responsibility for COVID-19 measures to the state governments, whose hands were effectively tied by the new law. Restrictions on going out, the prohibition of major events, restrictions to travel, the closure of daycare centres and schools, and other lockdown measures that had proven highly effective in the past are now explicitly ruled out.

The pandemic has since spiraled completely out of control. Daily infection rates are many times higher than in previous waves, the virus is spreading almost unchecked in schools, numerous intensive care clinics have reached the limits of their capacity, long queues are forming in front of vaccination centres, and the number of fatalities every day is equivalent to the crash of a jumbo jet. The spread of the more infectious Omicron variant has made the situation even worse.

On Friday, Germany’s stock markets, which have soared in the pandemic and reached record highs, reacted. At some times, the Dax and EuroStoxx50 fell as sharply as they did during the stock market crash that accompanied the first wave of the pandemic in March 2020. The Dax closed down 4.2 percent.

For the traffic light coalition, this is one more reason to stick to their murderous course. The coalition’s coronavirus policy is geared exclusively to the interests of big business and the banks. Like the US government and other capitalist governments around the world, its concern is not how many lives will be lost, but rather what will take place the next day on the stock exchanges and how best to delay any action until the end of the Christmas shopping period.

That is why the new coalition has appointed a two-star general with 36 years of military experience to the chancellor’s office as head of its crisis response team.

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