

Growing Number of German and International Fighters Join Ukrainian Neo-Nazi Azov Battalion - Report

By [RT News](#)

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Ukraine's neo-Nazi Azov Battalion is reportedly gaining traction in Europe, especially Germany. Over 2,500 foreign mercenaries are currently fighting on their side in E. Ukraine - three times more than in 2014, Spiegel reports, citing security authorities.

Ultra-nationalist Azov Battalion members distribute flyers to recruit new members at neo-Nazi events across Europe, German magazine Spiegel [claims](#). Their promotional campaign appears to be effective, as “*more and more mercenaries*” are joining in to “*save Europe from extinction.*”

In July, flyers were reportedly distributed among visitors to a rock festival in Themar, Thuringia, inviting them to “*join the ranks of the best*” to “*rescue Europe.*” Photos of German neo-Nazis posing in battle suits with Azov symbols have reportedly surfaced across social media networks, according to the magazine.

The small town of Themar saw 6,000 far-right concertgoers taking part in the Rock against Foreign Domination event in July. Images posted online showed visitors wearing T-shirts making acronymic reference to the phrases ‘*I love Hitler,*’ ‘*I love National Socialism,*’ and ‘*swastika.*’

Ahead of the festival, Themar residents voiced growing concerns over the concert, displaying banners reading: “*All these Nazis are insane, they must have potato brains*” and “*Your voice against Nazis.*” But local authorities said they could not [prevent](#) the festival from taking place, as it was not illegal under German law.

The right-wing extremist volunteer Azov Battalion is gaining more and more support in Germany, according to Spiegel. Their “*advertising campaign*” has apparently been successful, the magazine says, noting that social media networks increasingly display photos of German neo-Nazis who proudly show off their allegiance to Azov.

Following the 2014 Maidan coup in Kiev, militants from the Azov Battalion were organized and incorporated into the Ukrainian National Guard, used in Kiev's military action against the self-proclaimed republics of Donetsk and Lugansk. The unit was established by the leader of the ‘Ukraine Patriot’ movement, Andrey Biletsky - also known in nationalist circles by the nickname ‘White Leader.’

Although Ukrainian Interior Minister Arsen Avakov sought to include the Azov Battalion in a

training program run by US Army units in western Ukraine, in 2015 the US House of Representatives unanimously adopted legislation outlawing the training and arming of the group. It [referred](#) to the battalion as “*openly neo-Nazi*” and “*fascist*,” and prohibited US instructors from training or arming them.

The Russian Foreign Ministry [welcomed](#) the move, noting that

“it took the American Congress more than a year to realize that this battalion is a gathering of blatant neo-Nazis parading Hitler’s SS forces insignia.”

Foreign Ministry spokesman Aleksandr Lukashevich said that the next “*logical step*” for US lawmakers would be to finally recognize that the 2014 coup in Kiev, which was “*actively supported by Washington, was staged by the same neo-Nazi thugs. Obviously, other units of Ukraine’s National Guard are no better than ‘Azov,’*” he added.

Azov is easily recognizable by its use of the Wolfsangel (Wolf’s Hook), an ancient symbol that was also used during WWII by Nazi SS divisions and fellow Dutch Nazi sympathizers. Azov’s emblem also includes the Black Sun symbol of the SS.

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