

On Hitler's Birthday, U.S. Will Begin Training Ukraine's Far-right National Guard

Perhaps the Defense Department's PR staff could have picked a better day.

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On Tuesday, The Associated Press [reported](#) The United States plans to send soldiers to Ukraine later this month to train the country's national guard, which includes groups expressly espousing support for far-right and Nazi ideology.

Ukraine's Interior Minister Arsen Avakov said in a Facebook post on Sunday that the units to be trained include the Azov Battalion, a volunteer force that has attracted criticism for its far-right sentiments including brandishing an emblem widely used in Nazi Germany.

As the BBC would describe the Azov Battalion [last December](#):

The volunteer Azov Battalion is a case in point.

Run by the extremist Patriot of Ukraine organisation, which considers Jews and other minorities "sub-human" and calls for a white, Christian crusade against them, it sports three Nazi symbols on its insignia: a modified Wolf's Hook, a black sun (or "Haken Sonne") and the title Black Corps, which was used by the Waffen SS. Azov is just one of more than 50 volunteer groups fighting in the east, the vast majority of which are not extremist, yet it seems to enjoy special backing from some top officials.

That the United States is supporting neo-Nazi factions is nothing particularly new. Indeed, Alternet's Max Blumenthal (as well as [other outlets](#)) have [documented](#) this fact for well over a year. What is of note is that (A) the United States military is now doing so openly and seemingly without much shame and (B) deciding, in a perverse irony, to begin this latest partnership on Hitler's Birthday. As the AP would explain:

Avakov said the training will begin April 20 at a base in western Ukraine near the Polish border and would involve about 290 American paratroopers and some 900 Ukrainian guardsmen.

Surely, someone in either the Ukrainian or American chain of command or in the Pentagon's PR department could see why this was a bad idea, no?

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