

Russian Neo-Nazis Participate in 'Denazifying' Ukraine – Der Spiegel

May 23, 2022



"Rusich Military-Patriotic Club, St.Petersburg." vk.com/rusiczpolska

At least two neo-Nazi groups are fighting for Russian forces in Ukraine, throwing into question Moscow's claims of "denazifying" its neighbor, German weekly Der Spiegel [reported](#) Sunday, citing a confidential intelligence report.

The document shared with German ministries by the BND intelligence service does not provide the exact number of far-right fighters, but identifies them as the Russian Imperial Legion and Rusich groups.

Their involvement "makes the ostensible reason for war, the so-called 'denazification' of Ukraine, absurd," BND is quoted as saying.

Both groups are thought to have participated in the war between Moscow-backed, pro-Russian separatists and Kyiv that broke out in eastern Ukraine in 2014. Several reports have linked Rusich with Wagner, a shadowy, Kremlin-linked private military company.

Russia sent troops into Ukraine on Feb. 24 with the stated aim of “denazifying and demilitarizing” its pro-Western neighbor, before shifting its focus toward eastern Ukraine for the campaign's second phase in late March.

The Russian Imperial Legion is a paramilitary arm of the ultranationalist Russian Imperial Movement, which the United States [designated](#) as a terrorist organization in 2020.

“Whether this decision [to join the conflict in Ukraine] was made at the request of or in consultation with the Russian leadership” is unclear, the BND analysis writes.

The Russian Imperial Legion announced its decision to enter combat operations in Ukraine shortly after its leader Denis Gariyev called on supporters to “be patient” in early March, the report states. Rusich is believed to have become involved no later than early April.

The Russian Imperial Movement’s flag was seen in Ukraine by the Guardian [in Mid-March](#) Meanwhile,. Britain’s The Times [located](#) Rusich fighters crossing into eastern Ukraine’s Kharkiv region near the Russian border in early April.

Gariyev, his deputy and two other right-wing extremists are believed to have been wounded in the fighting, BND said in the report cited by Der Spiegel. Rusich founder Alexei Milchakov was wounded as soon as the group entered Ukraine.

Milchakov and Rusich co-founder Yan Petrovsky had met at a Russian Imperial Movement paramilitary training program, according to The Times. Both were pictured in the BND report cited by Der Spiegel with a swastika flag and a Hitler salute.

The BND identified another Rusich member, Alexander M., as a military correspondent at Russia’s Channel One state broadcaster, according to Der Spiegel.

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