

US House approves measure blocking training of neo-Nazi militia in Ukraine

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The House of Representatives approved an amendment to the 2016 Pentagon budget last week that blocks US training of members of the Ukrainian paramilitary Azov Battalion because of its neo-Nazi character. The measure, which was put forward by Democratic Representative John Conyers and Republican Representative Ted Yoho, is stark admission by Congress that the Obama administration has been backing fascist forces in Ukraine.

The House also approved two other amendments by Conyers and Yoho that would block the transfer of shoulder-fired anti-aircraft missiles, known as MANPADS, to US-backed armed forces in Ukraine and Iraq.

The House approved the 2016 Pentagon budget Thursday in a 278 to 149 vote. It has been sent to the Senate for debate and approval.

It is far from certain that the version of the military budget approved by the House will ultimately pass. The White House has stated that President Barack Obama is planning to veto the bill since it raises military spending above the sequester limits set in 2013 without restoring nondefense cuts, and would prohibit the use of funds for the transfer of detainees from the prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba to the US.

Conyers released a statement after the approval of the amendments in which he argued that the training of the Azov Battalion and the dispatch of anti-aircraft missiles would have potentially deadly consequences.

The statement said, “If there’s one simple lesson we can take away from US involvement in conflicts overseas, it’s this: Beware of unintended consequences. As was made vividly clear with U.S. involvement in Afghanistan during the Soviet invasion decades ago, overzealous military assistance or the hyper-weaponization of conflicts can have destabilizing

consequences and ultimately undercut our own national interests.”

Conyers claimed that the measures would “ensure that our military does not train members of the repulsive neo-Nazi Azov Battalion,” and “keep the dangerous and easily trafficked MANPADs out of these unstable regions.”

Even though it is unclear if the budget with the amendments attached will ultimately pass, the episode is further confirmation of the leading role played by far-right and fascist forces in last year’s US coup, which ousted pro-Russian President Victor Yanukovych, and the ensuing civil war. The fascist forces that served as the spearhead of the coup were then mobilized into so-called volunteer battalions to lead the assault directed by Kiev against pro-Russian separatists in the east.

The Azov Battalion, formed in May 2014 to assist in the suppression of pro-Russian protests, has been incorporated into the recently formed Ukrainian National Guard. The group’s symbol is the wolfsangel, a modified Swastika used by the German SS during World War II.

The paramilitary group’s leader, Andriy Biletsky, elected to the Ukrainian parliament as an independent candidate last year, is also the founder of the neo-Nazi Social-National Assembly and the paramilitary Patriot of Ukraine organization.

The Azov Battalion was reportedly left out of recent training exercises being carried out by the US military due to concerns over its neo-Nazi background.

Approximately 300 US paratroopers arrived in Ukraine in April to equip and train members of the Ukrainian National Guard as part of a six-month operation codenamed Fearless Guardian. The operations are part of preparations by the Western puppet regime in Kiev for a renewed offensive against

the pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine.

The first eight weeks of exercises culminated in an operation to “clean up” a mock village populated by US soldiers posing as pro-Russian separatists. In another mock operation, Ukrainian National Guardsmen were tasked with kidnapping and interrogating a separatist leader. According to *Ukraine Today* this training would “better enable the Ukrainian National Guard troops to face the enemy in eastern Ukraine.”



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