

Democrats cover up links between fascist “trainers,” US Capitol Police and other police departments

Jacob Crosse
9 July 2021

The *World Socialist Web Site* has uncovered evidence that police departments across the United States have paid thousands of dollars for “training” by a fascistic private military contractor, Northern Red Inc. Former trainers at the company who have since left and founded their own ventures have continued to train police departments in the death squad tactics honed in the course of US neo-colonial wars overseas.

Last month, during a congressional hearing on the January 6 coup attempt that took testimony from US Capitol Police Inspector General Michael Bolton, it was revealed that in 2018 and 2019 the US Capitol Police paid Northern Red Inc. \$90,075 to train its Containment Emergency Response Team, or CERT. Bolton confirmed that the same CERT squad refused to fire “less-lethal” rounds on pro-Trump insurrectionists storming the Capitol and failed to assist in evacuating members of Congress during the violent attack.

At the hearing of the House Administration Committee, held on June 15, Bolton also revealed that John-David Potynsky, founder and CEO of Northern Red and a highly-trained former US Special Forces soldier, utilized neo-Nazi iconography for the company’s logo and website and on patches worn by his trainers. These symbols continue to be prominently displayed on the Northern Red website and on company-run social media accounts.

The Capitol Police as a whole were deliberately under-deployed and under-equipped for the January 6 certification of the Electoral College vote, despite Donald Trump’s refusal to accept his defeat in the November election and his repeated calls for far-right militia groups and supporters to come to Washington D.C to “Stop the Steal.”

The stunning revelation that the Capitol Police’s emergency response unit had been trained by contractors with an affinity for the Third Reich has been buried by the corporate media and the Democratic Party. To date, not a single article on the use of Northern Red Inc. by the US Capitol Police has been published by the *Washington Post* or the *New York Times*, nor has the information been reported on the cable or broadcast television channels.

The only publication besides the *World Socialist Web Site* that has reported on the US government’s use of Nazi admirers as police trainers is the Capitol Hill publication *Congressional Quarterly Roll Call*. It reported in June that not only did the Capitol Police pay Northern Red nearly \$100,000 to train its CERT unit, but that the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the US Army and the US Air Force also paid for training by the contractor.

The WSWS has found evidence that former employees and collaborators of Potynsky, all of whom are highly trained former US

Special Forces soldiers, continue to train law enforcement agencies in the same assassination tactics put to use in Iraq and Afghanistan.

This includes the former lead trainer for Northern Red and former Army Delta Force soldier Zack Harrison. After joining the military in 2003 and deploying overseas as a member of Delta Force, Harrison left the military and joined Potynsky at Northern Red in 2014. Harrison appears in several Northern Red social media posts, including Instagram posts and YouTube videos, touting the training that he and Potynsky offered.

Harrison left Northern Red in 2020 to form his own company, Hades Consulting LLC, which, like Northern Red, caters to police departments and military personnel.

Based on a review of social media accounts for both companies, the WSWS has confirmed as of this writing that current and former Northern Red personnel have trained members of the following police departments:

- * Jacksonville, Florida
- * Trenton, New Jersey
- * Oakland County, Michigan
- * Los Angeles, California
- * San Francisco, California

They have also been contracted to train members of the US Secret Service.

It is likely that other police departments and agencies have paid for the services of Potynsky, Harrison and similar far-right paramilitary contractors.

Potynsky had multiple deployments overseas as a Green Beret and later with the private military contractor TigerSwan. In this April 2010 YouTube video, Potynsky, in between shooting targets set to Disturbed’s “Down with the Sickness,” gives a testimonial on the benefits of the training offered by TigerSwan, which includes “combat experience.”

The video ends with the camera panning to Potynsky’s back over words emblazoned on a company T-shirt reading: “For those who have hunted armed men training will never be the same.” The phrase appears to have struck a chord with Potynsky, who continues to emblazon it on the home page of Northern Red Inc.

TigerSwan is a private military contractor founded in 2007 by former Delta Forces commander James Reese. Retiring as a Lt. Colonel after spending 25 years in the military, Reese ended his career leading an assassination squad in Iraq that hunted alleged Al-Qaeda operatives. After retiring from the military in 2007, Reese worked for the US State Department in Iraq and Afghanistan and then served as

director of security operations for Erik Prince's infamous mercenary group Blackwater.

In 2007, McClatchy reported that as Blackwater was under investigation for the Nisour Square Massacre, it cancelled a deal to buy farm land for a new training ground near Fort Bragg in North Carolina. An offer to purchase the land was originally put forward by Reese, who confirmed that the financing for the property would be provided by Blackwater and that Prince had made a final inspection of the property before agreeing to a price.

After leaving TigerSwan, Potynsky launched Northern Red in 2011. On January 1, 2013, Northern Red and Invictus Alliance Group, which was founded in 2010 by former Delta Force Sniper Tom Spooner and his brother Scot Spooner, announced that the two companies had "joined forces." On Twitter, "JD and Tom" posted under the @InvictusAG handle throughout 2013 and 2014. Typical posts from the account glorified the military while attacking Democrats, immigrants and generally anyone to the left of Ronald Reagan.

A December 2013 post by InvictusAG showing police in a hallway is captioned "Entry training, AKA CQB [Close Quarters Battle], Oakland County, Sheriff department, Michigan."

Beginning in 2014, Hartland, Wisconsin-based gun-manufacturer Bravo Company Manufacturing USA (BCM) began what it termed a "Gunfighter" sponsorship program, in which the company paid private military contractors to use their equipment as well as appear in promotional videos. Northern Red's website features many links to BCM products. BCM was founded by Paul Buffoni, a former Marine who deployed to Iraq in 2003.

The first episode of "American Gunfighter—produced by BCM" was uploaded on July 2, 2014 and featured Potynsky speaking of his desire to kill those allegedly responsible for the September 11 terrorist attacks.

The second episode of "American Gunfighter," uploaded on August 29, 2014, featured Tom Spooner, while the seventh episode of the series, uploaded on November 20, 2016, featured Chris Kovacic, John Ellsion and Zach Harrison. All three men are either former or current Northern Red trainers and former US special operations soldiers.

BCM chief executive Buffoni made headlines in 2013 when he cancelled a bid he had won to supply carbines to the Milwaukee Police Department after then-Chief Edward Flynn testified before a Senate committee in support of an assault rifle ban. Spooner and Potynsky have likewise made clear their fanatical opposition to gun control, cutting promos for the National Rifle Association in 2014.

On his LinkedIn profile, Spooner lists that from 2014 to 2017 he was a managing partner at Northern Red Inc. After an apparent fallout with Potynsky, Spooner stopped appearing in Northern Red promotional material. The Invictus Alliance Group no longer is in operation.

However, Spooner and Harrison continue to collaborate, as seen in this Instagram post from March of this year, in which Harrison pledges his support for Spooner's company Warrior's Heart, which claims to be "healing our nation's warriors with an addiction, through our private, licensed & accredited resort-style healing center."

In addition to being sponsored by BCM, Spooner has provided interviews and appeared in videos sponsored by the Black Rifle Coffee Company (BRCC). BRCC has branded itself to appeal to the police and military, selling items like the "thin blue line" Keurig cup, which carries the motto "Fresh Roasted Freedom."

The CEO of BRCC is Evan Hafer, who, like Potynsky, Spooner and

Harrison, is a former Green Beret soldier. Hafer was also a "special operator" with the Central Intelligence Agency for nine years, according to a bio on his own website.

Despite only being founded in 2014, BRCC has received powerful endorsements from major right-wing political figures. In November 2017, Fox News Host Sean Hannity tweeted that he was "so buying this coffee!!!" Donald Trump Jr. retweeted Hannity, adding: "Great coffee, great guys and great Americans @seanhannity I've had the chance to meet and hang out with them. Try it. #blackriflecoffeecompany"

In a 2017 interview with *Task & Purpose*, Hafer embraced the endorsements he received, telling his interviewer, "I want people who voted for Trump to know that there is another option for you."

Just last month, BRCC opened a new location in North Richland Hills, Texas. As part of the grand opening, Hafer announced he would be donating \$10,000 to Spooner's Warrior's Heart.

Last year, BRCC found itself in a bind with sections of its base after a picture was posted on Twitter featuring Kyle Rittenhouse wearing a BRCC shirt while standing alongside his attorney John Pierce and actor Rick Schroder. The photo was originally tweeted by conservative podcast host Elijah Schaffer, whose show, "Slightly Offens*ve," is sponsored by BRCC. The text accompanying the photo read: "Kyle Rittenhouse drinks the best coffee in America," and featured a discount code under the post.

After a widespread backlash, BRCC and Hafer tried to distance themselves from Rittenhouse, putting out a statement saying they were not sponsoring the murderer. However, they did not indicate in their statement if they had contributed to his bail fund. In interviews with right-wing media seeking to shore up the brand's far-right bona-fides, Hafer went out of his way to support Rittenhouse's "right to defend himself."

Less than two months later, another fascist was photographed wearing BRCC apparel. On January 6, Eric G. Munchel, or, as he was known until his arrest, "Zip Tie guy," was seen jumping over chairs in the US Senate chamber while wearing body armor and holding zip ties. He wore a BRCC-branded black hat featuring an American flag with an overlay of an M-16 rifle.



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact