

Ukrainian military chief photographed with far-right paraphernalia

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Ukraine's Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces, Valerii Zaluzhnyi, has been photographed several times in recent weeks while wearing or displaying photos and symbols associated with the far right and even neo-Nazism.

In one photo widely circulated on Twitter which was Zaluzhnyi's own account posted, he can be seen walking with a gun while wearing a bracelet adorned with far-right symbols, including one symbol resembling a Nazi swastika. The bracelet is sold as a "Viking" bracelet in Ukraine and contains a number of symbols that are associated with Norse mythology and employed by far right and neo-Nazi movements worldwide.

In another photo, Zaluzhnyi is shown standing in a military office with several other soldiers in front of a desk adorned with busts of OUN-B leaders and Nazi-collaborators Stepan Bandera and Roman Shukhevych. Photos of both Shukhevych and Bandera are prominently hanging on the wall in the background. A separate photo taken in Zaluzhnyi's office also has a bust of Bandera displayed on a table against a wall.

Supporters of the NATO-backed proxy war in Ukraine on Twitter and Western media outlets such as France24 have attempted to whitewash Zaluzhnyi's choices of decoration by pointing out that the swastika on the bracelet is not as prominent as it appears in Zaluzhnyi's Twitter photo. Zaluzhnyi has been depicted as a heroic figure in the Western pro-imperialist press and has even recently appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine. To acknowledge the role of far-right forces within Ukraine is tantamount to heresy within the corporate press, since it would expose the real character of the imperialist-backed war in Ukraine.

However, the bracelet, combined with the far-right paraphernalia openly displayed in Ukrainian military

offices leaves no doubt that Zaluzhnyi is supportive of the use of far-right symbols and the veneration of Ukrainian World War II Nazi collaborators within the Ukrainian military.

The photos also clearly demonstrate the extent to which the far-right, rather than being merely a marginal element, is in fact closely linked to the highest levels of Ukrainian government and military, which themselves are in constant contact with the Biden administration.

On the same day that Zaluzhnyi posted the photo of himself wearing the far-right bracelet, he also revealed that he had just spoken with United States General Mark Milley, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. According to Zaluzhnyi, he and Milley "match[ed] our clocks regarding the level of supply of the Ukrainian military with weapons and material."

The photos of Zaluzhnyi associating himself openly with far-right figures and symbology also appeared on the same day that Azov Battalion fighters recently released by Moscow revealed that Azov's Commander Denis Prokopenko had been in contact with both Zaluzhnyi and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky while being trapped within the Azovstal factory in Mariupol. According to Azov Major Bohdan Krotevych, "The whole operation of our exit was agreed to with government leadership. It was a tough operation."

Zaluzhnyi was first appointed to his post as Commander in Chief by Zelensky in July 2021 and immediately displayed a predilection towards military escalation with Russia. In September of 2021, Zaluzhnyi permitted Ukrainian forces to open fire on Donbass separatists without having to consult first with military leadership. Later, in October of 2021, Zaluzhnyi ordered the first use of Turkish-supplied Bayraktar drones in a strike against separatist forces in

Donbass. The attack drew a sharp rebuke from Moscow as the use of “foreign unmanned aerial vehicles” was clearly banned under the Minsk peace accord.

In November of 2021, Zaluzhniy made his support for the far-right public when appointed former Right Sector leader Dmytro Yarosh as his advisor. Yarosh previously led the Right Sector’s paramilitary formation the Ukrainian Volunteer Corps and played a leading role in carrying out Kiev’s war against the breakaway Donbass regions after the regular Ukrainian Armed Forces suffered from mass desertions and defeats. Zaluzhniy later refused to reveal the details of Yarosh’s role of advisor or of his dismissal from the post in December 2021 and it is still unclear exactly what role Yarosh played.

More recently, the city of Dnipro renamed one of its major streets after Stepan Bandera after the Mayor of the city promised Yarosh he would honor Bandera in the largely Russian-speaking city when the right time came. In September, Yarosh posted to Facebook that Ukraine should make territorial claims on several Russian regions and cities such as Belgorod, Kuban, Voronezh and continue the war into Russia to capture “Ukrainian lands.”



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