

Democrats, Sanders, Jacobin defend Maine's Graham Platner following Nazi tattoo revelation

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Since it was revealed earlier this month that Graham Platner, the Bernie Sanders-endorsed Democratic candidate for Maine's Senate seat, had a *Totenkopf* skull and crossbones Nazi tattoo on his chest for nearly two decades while serving as a soldier/mercenary for US imperialism, the pseudo-left and self-proclaimed "progressive" Democrats have lined up in defense of the far-right candidate.

This campaign is being led by *Jacobin* magazine and joined by figures such as Krystal Ball of *Breaking Points*. They have pointed to Platner's posting history on Reddit to claim that his comments, which Platner deleted but had written under the handle "P-Hustle," show a man with "progressive" and "anti-fascist" views rather than a "secret Nazi."

Last week *Jacobin*'s Branko Marcetic published two articles in defense of Platner. In his latest piece published on October 27, "You're Being Lied to About Graham Platner," Marcetic argues that the "vilification of the Maine candidate for Senate doesn't square with what he actually wrote in his posts." Marcetic writes:

Reading through Platner's many hundreds of anonymous comments, it's hard to paint him as a secret white supremacist or far-right extremist of any kind. In fact, his posts more or less align with the persona he has presented to voters in the two months since he launched his campaign: a rough-around-the-edges military veteran and oyster farmer with a penchant for crude language and a passion for firearms and sustainable living who holds a variety of standard progressive views alongside some heterodox ones.

Likewise in an editorial segment on her program *Breaking Points*, Ball, a supporter of Sanders and the 2022 John Fetterman Senate campaign in Pennsylvania, said the revelation that Platner had a Nazi tattoo made her "more ride or die for him than ever." She added that "we actually have access to his edgiest sh*t posts and none of them are far right."

In fact, what Platner actually wrote under his "P-Hustle" handle, combined with his record in service of US imperialism, completely refutes these claims. Far from revealing a "progressive" outlook, his posts express open admiration for the most reactionary and murderous episodes in the history of American imperialism.

In a 2010 thread titled "What American wars would you have volunteered to fight in?" Platner replied:

"The Indian Wars, the Philippines, Haiti and Nicaragua in the 1920's, Vietnam, Nicaragua and El Salvador again in the 80's. As for would have, I 'did' for Iraq and would love to get to the Ghan. [Afghanistan]"

He added:

Small wars are pretty enjoyable. It's the big ones, with days of artillery fire and inhuman brutality that take the fun out of fighting. But small wars (and Iraq and Afghanistan are indeed small wars) provide the rush of small combat actions along with the intellectual challenge of building personal relationships and infrastructure within the local community. Small wars are thinking wars, which I much prefer over the bloody slugfests of great-power conventional warfare. Oh, and the revolution, because I'm Amuuurican."

Every war on his list, save the American Revolution, was a war of conquest and counterrevolution, fought to crush liberation movements and secure profits for American corporations. To call such bloodshed "pretty enjoyable" is to express enthusiasm for the organized mass killing of oppressed peoples.

It is notable that Platner named the Indian Wars, that is, the US genocide against the Native Americans, as the first colonial campaign he would have wished to have taken part in. The Nazis, many who wore the same *Totenkopf* symbol on their uniforms that Platner had tattooed on his chest at the time he wrote this post, openly celebrated the conquest of the American West as an example to follow for their own eastward campaign.

Platner also explicitly praised the Philippine occupation and the US invasions of Haiti and Nicaragua, the Vietnam War as conflicts he "would have volunteered" to fight in. The Philippine-American War saw the slaughter of hundreds of thousands of Filipinos resisting US rule. The US occupations of Haiti and Nicaragua in the early 20th century imposed puppet regimes, seized national treasures and reintroduced forced labor for the American banks.

Even more revealing is Platner's description of Iraq and Afghanistan as "small wars ... pretty enjoyable," providing a "rush of small combat actions." The "intellectual challenge" he cites—"building personal relationships and infrastructure within the local community"—is the euphemistic vocabulary of counter-insurgency doctrine, which posits that occupation can be made palatable if coupled with a public relations campaign and token reconstruction efforts.

Notably absent from Platner's list of wars is the American Civil War—the last progressive war fought by the American bourgeoisie, which ended in the destruction of chattel slavery. Karl Marx, in a letter to Abraham Lincoln following his re-election during the war, wrote:

The workingmen of Europe feel sure that, as the American War of Independence initiated a new era of ascendancy for the middle class, so the American Antislavery War will do for the working

classes. They consider it an earnest of the epoch to come that it fell to the lot of Abraham Lincoln, the single-minded son of the working class, to lead his country through the matchless struggle for the rescue of an enchain'd race and the reconstruction of a social world.

Platner, a supposed “left-wing populist,” apparently finds nothing to admire in the struggle to end slavery but reveres every campaign of imperialist slaughter that followed it. This is a person who did not fight for human emancipation but killed in the service of empire and openly pines for more.

In multiple Reddit posts, Platner glorifies the Marines and reminisces about combat experiences. In one thread he posted about violating an order forbidding the shooting of mortar rounds in Ramadi. Platner recalls rigging an MK-19 automatic grenade launcher to shoot high explosive rounds “seemingly straight up.”

“It wasn’t the most accurate system and I’ve no idea if we ever killed an enemy mortar crew with it, but it was enough to place (High Explosive) near the enemy crews so they’d have to break down and try from somewhere else next time,” he wrote in a December 2019 post.

That *Jacobin* conceals these facts and instead markets Platner as a “rough-around-the-edges” Marine “with progressive views” exposes the real social function of the pseudo-left. Its role is to launder imperialism—to provide a “left” gloss for the Democratic Party’s integration of the military, intelligence agencies and corporate elite. In defending Platner, *Jacobin* is not defending a confused veteran but a man who glorified genocide, served US imperialism for pay and now seeks political office to continue that service by other means.

The pseudo-left’s invocation of Platner’s deleted Reddit posts as evidence of his “progressive” credentials is therefore revealing of their own political subordination to US imperialism. Moreover, as his entire record shows—from three tours in the US occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan, to his later employment as a mercenary for Blackwater/Constellis, to his *Totenkopf* tattoo, the emblem of the Nazi SS—Platner’s actions express the very essence of American militarism and reaction.

In the wake of these revelations, *Jacobin*’s defense of Platner takes on an even more sinister character. Marcet’s portrayal of him as a “progressive veteran” whitewashes a man who has spent his adult life enforcing the interests of US imperialism.

After deploying with the Marine Corps and US National Guard, Platner, while working for the US State Department, joined Blackwater/Constellis, the mercenary army notorious for the 2007 Nisour Square massacre in Baghdad. On Reddit, he defended the company and dismissed its atrocities as the inevitable “f***-ups” of “amateurs.”

The whole “Blackwater hit squads” narrative is complete bullshit. It’s all security, totally reactive. ... The big events were almost entirely massive f***-ups from ill-prepared and untrained amateurs like Nisoor (sic) Square. ... I say this as a guy who did the security contractor thing for a bit.

His supposed ignorance of the *Totenkopf* symbol is no more credible. Platner’s Reddit posts show a deep and proud familiarity with Marine Corps and military history. In multiple threads he discussed the battles of Iwo Jima, Tarawa, the Battle of the Bulge and the Pacific campaigns.

Platner’s entire public persona—a “working-class veteran” turned “oyster farmer”—is a political fabrication. As a teenager he attended two

private schools, including the \$75,000-a-year Hotchkiss School, an elite Connecticut prep school whose alumni included CIA Director Porter Goss, Jonathan Bush (President George H.W. Bush’s brother and investment banker), William Clay Ford Sr. and Jr., Robert Lehman of Lehman Brothers Inc., Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart and Clinton adviser Strobe Talbott. His grandfather, Warren Platner, was a world-renowned architect and designer as his *New York Times* obituary notes, and Platner’s father, Bronson Platner, is a prominent Maine attorney.

Far from an economic conscript forced to sign up for the US military out of desperation, Platner belongs to the upper strata of the American bourgeoisie—a layer whose sons move effortlessly between elite schools, the military and corporate or political office. His “populism” is as phony as his claims to have been unaware that he had a Nazi tattoo on his chest for over 18 years.

The fact is Platner’s pro-imperialist politics are the same today as they were when he was deployed to Afghanistan and Iraq. In an August 2025 interview with *The American Prospect*, Platner expressed support for the ongoing US-NATO war in Ukraine against Russia.

I support the Ukrainians in their fight. They were invaded. They’re resisting with all the means that they can. And I personally think that we should provide them with support.

His statement echoes the propaganda of the Biden and increasingly the Trump administration, which portrays the conflict as an unprovoked act of Russian aggression while concealing the decades-long expansion of NATO and the US effort to dominate Eurasia. Platner’s endorsement of this imperialist war is not an aberration but the culmination of his political trajectory. The same Marine who praised the Indian Wars and fought in Iraq now supports NATO’s drive toward World War III.

Joining the pseudo-left in defending this right-wing soldier for US imperialism are leading members of the Democratic Party. Connecticut Senator Chris Murphy, a key advocate of arming Ukraine and Israel, told CNN’s Jake Tapper that he would be meeting with Platner this week.

He sounds like a human being who made mistakes, recognizes them, and is very open about it. ... He’s talking a language that speaks to a lot of middle class voters, a lot of Trump voters that frankly are looking for Democrats that understand working class concerns.

Platner’s promotion is part of the Democratic Party’s ongoing strategy of recruiting soldiers and intelligence operatives, known as CIA Democrats, to give its imperialist program a “populist” veneer.

Bernie Sanders, Platner’s most prominent backer, went even further. Asked about the Nazi tattoo in an interview with Axios last week, Sanders downplayed the issue entirely, “Between you and me there might be one or two more important issues.”

Sanders praised Platner’s “service” stating, “He served four tours of duty with the United States military. He was in some heavy duty combat. He was a machine gunner, what do you do? You mow down people, you know.” He then called for “forgiveness” for Platner’s “dark period,” describing him as “a really strong fighter for the working class, very articulate, very smart.”

The pseudo-left’s embrace of Platner—by *Jacobin*, *The American Prospect*, Ball, Sanders—exposes the unbridgeable gulf between socialism and the politics of the Democratic Party. Their defense of a fascist-sympathizing mercenary confirms that their role is to provide a “left”

gloss for US imperialism and the Democratic Party.



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