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Far-Right Group Made Its Home in Ukraine's Major Western Military Training Hub



Oleksiy Kuzmenko

IERES Occasional Papers, no. 11, September 2021
"Transnational History of the Far Right" Series

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Cover Photo: Photo posted by “Centuria’ on Telegram, Photo posted by Roman Rusnyk on Instagram, Photo posted by Vladyslav Vintergoller on Instagram, Photo posted by Vitaliy Rosolovskiy on Instagram, Photo capture of Tweet posted by the Embassy of Ukraine to the United Kingdom.

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Summary

Evidence uncovered in this paper suggests that since 2018, the Hetman Petro Sahaidachny National Army Academy (NAA), Ukraine's premier military education institution and a major hub for Western military assistance to the country, has been home to Centuria, a self-described order of "European traditionalist" military officers that has the stated goals of reshaping the country's military along right-wing ideological lines and defending the "cultural and ethnic identity" of European peoples against "Brussels' politicians and bureaucrats." The group envisions a future where "European right forces are consolidated and national traditionalism is established as the disciplining ideological basis for the European peoples."

The group, led by individuals with ties to Ukraine's internationally active far-right Azov movement, has attracted multiple members, including current and former officer cadets of the NAA now serving in the Armed Forces of Ukraine. Apparent members have appeared in photos giving Nazi salutes and made seemingly extremist statements online.

The group has been able to proselytize Ukraine's future military elite inside the NAA. Apparent members have also gained access to Western military education and training institutions. One apparent member of the group, then NAA cadet Kyrylo Dubrovskiy, attended an 11-month Officer Training Course at the United Kingdom's Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, graduating in late 2020. During that time, Dubrovskiy apparently maintained ties to the group. Another apparent member and then NAA cadet, Vladyslav Vintergoller, attended the 30th International Week held by the German Army Officers' Academy (Die Offizierschule des Heeres, OSH) in Dresden, Germany, in April 2019. Meanwhile, inside Ukraine, members of the group have apparently had access to American military trainers, as well as American and French cadets. As recently as April 2021, the group claimed that since its launch, members have participated in joint military exercises with France, the UK, Canada, the US, Germany, and Poland.

The group claims that its members serve as officers in several units of Ukraine's military. These claims appear credible because of the group's confirmed presence in the NAA and the fact that some apparent members likely joined Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU) units after graduating between 2019 and 2021. Since at least 2019, Centuria has announced several mobilizations, calling on ideologically aligned members of the AFU to seek transfer to specific units where the group's members serve. To attract new members, the group—via its Telegram channel, which has over 1,200 followers and a dedicated mobilization bot—continues to tout its alleged role in the AFU and access to Western training, military, and exchange programs.

The group has strong ties to Ukraine's far-right Azov movement, has promoted Azov to NAA cadets, and credibly claimed that its members lectured in the Azov Regiment of the National Guard, the military wing of the Azov movement. The image of strong ties between the former and Centuria' is

further reinforced by the fact that an Azov-linked magazine contemporaneously reported the group's presence within the NAA in 2018; by supportive statements from Azov figures; by photos of the group's apparent leaders and members with Azov leaders; and by Centuria's participation in a political rally with the Azov movement. Online, Centuria has been endorsed by leading figures of the Azov movement, and apparent leaders and members of the group have appeared in photos with Azov's leader, Andriy Biletsky, and key spokesman for the movement Yuriy Mykhalchyshyn. The National Corps party, the political wing of the Azov movement, and the Azov Regiment did not return the author's requests to comment.

Centuria's ties to the Azov movement are alarming because the U.S. Congress banned the use of U.S. budget funds "to provide arms, training, or other assistance to the Azov Battalion" in 2018 and has since maintained that provision, including [in the 2021 government spending bill](#). Centuria's access to Western military training through the NAA and its alleged presence in the AFU may benefit the Azov movement. American lawmakers have repeatedly called on the Department of State to designate Azov as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO). In the most recent such call, in April 2021, Democratic Congresswoman Elissa Slotkin [wrote](#) to U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken that "the Azov Battalion [...] uses the internet to recruit new members and then radicalize them to use violence to pursue its white identity political agenda." Yet the US and Western governments have not called on the government of Ukraine to sever ties with the Azov movement, and that far-right organization remains integrated into the government of Ukraine via the Azov Regiment.

When reached for commentary about Centuria's activities, apparent leaders, and ideology, the National Army Academy denied that the group operated within the institution and stated that its probe into the group's alleged activities had turned up no evidence of such activities. But evidence collected in this paper firmly places the group in the academy. The NAA spokesman emphasized the Academy's intolerance of extremism. Belying such statements, in yet another case, an NAA cadet was apparently involved as a firearms instructor with an Azov movement-linked far-right group that the United Jewish Community of Ukraine accused in 2021 of spreading anti-Semitic propaganda. NAA cadets also appear in photos making gestures alluding to Nazi salutes.

Centuria's evident ability to operate within the NAA and its credible claims regarding its presence in the Armed Forces of Ukraine and access to Western training and military are likely just one of the consequences of the apparent lack of screening—by the Ukrainian authorities and Western governments alike—of Ukrainian servicemen for extremist views and ties to extremist groups. The Ukrainian military's failure to check Centuria activities suggests a level of tolerance on its part for the apparent proliferation of far-right ideology and influence within the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

Reached for comment, Ukraine's Ministry of Defense stated that it does not screen those entering the military or military cadets for extremist views and ties. Meanwhile, several Western governments involved in training and arming Ukrainian troops stated, in response to the author's request, that Ukraine is responsible for vetting Ukrainian soldiers trained by the West. None of the Western governments contacted—the US, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Germany—vet Ukrainian training recipients for extremist views and ties.

These findings and conclusions were made possible because the author [monitored and documented](#) Centuria's changing online presence from early 2019. Since that time, Centuria has moved toward increased secrecy, which likely explains the disappearance of earlier iterations of its online presence. Centuria's current Telegram channel, [@ArmyCen](#), has been active since April 2020. It was preceded by the now-inaccessible [@european_centuria](#) and [@euro_order](#) Telegram channels, active between 2018 and late 2019, as well as by the currently inaccessible Facebook page

<https://facebook.com/centuriaNASV>, the Instagram page active until late 2020 https://www.instagram.com/euro_order_centuria/, and the now dormant VK page https://vk.com/european_centuria. Notably, in yet another sign of the group's reliance on the Academy's brand for self-promotion, the URL of its Facebook page included the widely recognized and official initialism of the NAA's full name, where NASV stands for the Ukrainian "Національна Академія Сухопутних Військ," which, translated literally, means the National Academy of Land Forces.

The group's earlier online presence occasionally revealed faces, unique call signs, Telegram channels operated by the group's members, identifying details about them, or locations where alleged activities took place. These instances were preserved by the author, enabling to verify the locations of alleged events and trace particular members to their social media presence (including via such tools as facial recognition website Findclone.ru, which directs to profiles and photos on VK.com that match the face one searches). This led in some cases to the immediate discovery of their personal details and in others to additional evidence regarding their identity, the group's events and activities, and other members. Overall, the findings suggest that nearly 20 individuals are involved with Centuria, although this article does not name all of them. Evidence gleaned from the group's propaganda and social media profiles was checked against publicly available information about the Academy, its cadets, media reports from public events in which the group claimed to have participated, databases of publicly available information about residents of Ukraine, etc. Microsoft Azure Face verification tools were used to confirm the presence of particular individuals in certain photos and videos. The author also conducted interviews with or reached out to organizations and governments mentioned in the report, providing them with an opportunity to comment. The author also made efforts to reach out to "Centuria's apparent leaders, as well as to individual group members.

As the author reached out to Centuria, its apparent members, and the NAA for comment, the group and individuals linked to it took steps to remove portions of their online presence. The author preserved archived copies of the group's statements, pages operated by the group and its apparent members.

Likely timeline of activities

Late 2017- early 2018: apparent leaders of the group appear in photos linking them to the NAA

In 2018:

- The group is launched. Centuria's online posts name May 2018 as the date it began operations. However, its earliest online activities date back to February 2018.
- Centuria holds events inside the NAA
- *Національна оборона* (English: National Defense) magazine, linked to the far-right Azov movement, reports on Centuria's presence in the NAA

In 2019:

- Members allegedly conduct lectures for the Azov Regiment of the National Guard of Ukraine
- Centuria marches at a rally in Lviv organized by far-right parties

- Texts describing the group's ideology and goals in detail are published by Centuria online
- Centuria congratulates members on graduating from the NAA
- The group states that members have assumed roles as officers in several AFU units
- Centuria calls on followers within the Ukrainian military to seek transfer to specific military units where Centuria members supposedly serve as officers.
- Apparent member attends 30th International Week held by the German Army Officers' Academy in Dresden

In 2020:

- Apparent member of Centuria attends and graduates from 11-month Officer Training Course at the United Kingdom's Royal Military Academy Sandhurst
- Centuria congratulates members on graduating from the NAA
- Centuria continues to call on followers to seek transfer to a growing list of specific AFU units where members supposedly serve as officers
- Centuria states that besides members of the military, it is open to members of security and law enforcement agencies
- Centuria comes out with statements distancing itself from a newly-launched group of the same name that was previously known as National Militia, the street wing of the Azov movement
- The group claims continued activity within the NAA
- Apparent member of the group appears in photos with American military trainers taken at the International Peacekeeping and Security Center

In 2021:

- The group announces a new focus on cooperation with foreign units in Ukraine and a move to "more refined and secretive" activities
- Centuria congratulates members on graduating from the NAA
- It states that members of the group are active in Kyiv, Odessa, Kharkiv, and Lviv
- The group claims that members have proven effective as officers in the Armed Forces of Ukraine
- Centuria continues to call on followers to seek transfer to a growing list of specific AFU units where members supposedly serve as officers
- It claims that since the group's launch, multiple members have participated in military exercises with France, the UK, Canada, the US, Germany, and Poland

This research was produced by the author for the Institute for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies (IERES). The author coordinated his work with IERES Director, Dr Marlene Laruelle.

The NAA: Shaping the Country's Military Elite and Frontline Fighters with Western Assistance

The Hetman Petro Sahaidachny National Army Academy (NAA—Ukrainian: Національна академія сухопутних військ імені гетьмана Петра Сагайдачного) is a key institution in Ukraine’s military education system. With its sprawling centrally located campus—the scale of which can be appreciated via a [3D tour](#) available on the Academy’s site—in Lviv, the NAA is home to [thousands](#) of cadets on track to join Ukraine’s Armed Forces as officers. It is within the walls of the NAA that, according to the Academy’s Chief, Lt. Gen. Pavlo Tkachuk, “great Ukrainian military commanders of the future are acquiring their skills.”

Ukraine’s Western partners [are involved](#) in the shaping of its future military leaders. The Academy’s 2020-2025 [Strategy](#) highlights “facilitation of the integration into NATO” as a key part of its mission and emphasizes cooperation with NATO [military] education institutions. Currently, [per the NAA](#), dedicated permanent advisors from Germany, Canada, and Denmark, as well as experts of NATO’s Defense Education Enhancement Program (DEEP), are involved in shaping the curriculum the Academy teaches to its students. The Academy’s facilities also reflect the West’s involvement: in 2018, for example, the NAA [unveiled](#) a high-tech “Delta Classroom” sponsored by Canada.



Image: Photo posted to the NAA’s Facebook page shows cadets lined up in front of the buildings of the Academy.

A 2019 [report](#) by Army Inform, the Information Agency of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine, described the Academy as an “unquestionable” leader among Ukrainian military education institutions with regard to “events of international military cooperation.” The report also described the Academy’s “close relationship” with General Tadeusz Kościuszko Military University of Land Forces in Poland, General Jonas Žemaitis Military Academy of Lithuania, Theresian Military Academy (Austria), the Army Officers' Academy (Offizierschule des Heeres, OSH) in Dresden (Germany), and “other known foreign universities.” Per that report, in the first 11 months of 2019 alone, 63 foreign delegations visited the NAA, while its servicemen went abroad 37 times.

“Our best cadets have the opportunity to attend [courses lasting up to a year at] foreign military academies. For example, Sandhurst [Royal Military Academy Sandhurst] in the United Kingdom and Saint-Cyr [Special Military School of Saint-Cyr] in France,” NAA spokesman Anton Myronovych told the author over the phone, adding that cadets also, albeit less frequently, participate in shorter “study visits” to military education establishments in NATO countries.

The involvement of Ukraine’s Western partners with the NAA is reflected in its important events. For example, the 2020 officers’ graduation [ceremony](#)—which featured an address by Ukraine’s Prime Minister and a pre-recorded video address by the president of Ukraine—was attended by officials from the US, Canada, Germany, Denmark, Lithuania, and Sweden. Western military officials also addressed graduates during the event. In 2021, American, Canadian, Danish, German, Lithuanian, and Polish military officials were guests at the NAA [officers’ graduation event](#).



Image: Photo posted to the Joint Multinational Training Group—Ukraine Facebook page shows leaders of [Task Force Carentan](#) at the Oath of Allegiance ceremony at the NAA in August 2019.

It is not only via the Academy proper that NAA cadets benefit from Western military assistance to Ukraine. The Academy is indispensable as a major training and education hub for Ukrainian troops as that country's war with Russia enters its seventh year. The NAA has oversight over the International Peacekeeping and Security Center (IPSC) and 184th Training Center. At their busiest, the two centers host thousands of servicemen between them, according to [a 2017 video report](#) by a media outlet of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine. The IPSC, often referred to in the media simply as Yavoriv because of its location (Starychi, in the Yavoriv region of the Lviv oblast), is unquestionably the main hub for training Ukrainian troops, a process in which the US, Canada, and others play a prominent role. The center hosts both Canada's [Operation UNIFIER](#), the Canadian Armed Forces mission to support the Ukrainian military, and the U.S.-led Joint Multinational Training Group—Ukraine ([JMTG-U](#)), which trains and equips the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU), among other forms of assistance. The scale and sophistication of the IPSC, one of Europe's largest military polygons, were detailed in a [12-minute English language video](#) presentation available on the IPSC Facebook page. The West's input into the IPSC is immense. With the support of the U.S. Government, Yavoriv Combat Training Center was [established](#) in 2016 within the IPSC. A year later, a high-tech "Simulation Center" was [launched](#) with U.S. assistance. Speaking about the IPSC in 2020, NAA Chief Tkachuk [said](#) that it could "without undue modesty" be called "the outpost of international military cooperation for Ukraine and its Armed Forces." In May 2021, Tkachuk [said](#) that the experts of the U.S.-led JMTG-U alone had helped train over 20,000 servicemen for the AFU. Ukraine's Minister of Defense, Andrii Taran, [stated](#) in February 2021 that Canada's role [through Operation UNIFIER] in training Ukraine's defense and security forces was "key" and "unquestionable."



Image: Photo posted to the Canadian Armed Forces in Ukraine Facebook page shows the 2020 NAA graduation ceremony at the International Peacekeeping and Security Center in Yavoriv.

Notably, the IPSC ranges and training areas are available to NAA cadets. They also have some access to foreign instructors working with Ukrainian troops there. According to the NAA spokesman, foreign instructors in the IPSC “are actively involved” in training Academy cadets, and cadets also participate in international military exercises held in the IPSC, such as Maple Arch and Rapid Trident, in roles ranging from translators to being directly involved in the exercises within the participating units.



Image: Photo posted to the Canadian Armed Forces in Ukraine Facebook page shows then Commanding Officer of Canada’s Operation UNIFIER Lieutenant-Colonel (LCol) Ryan Stimpson speaking at the 2020 NAA graduation ceremony at the International Peacekeeping and Security Center in Yavoriv.

Responding via email to the author’s request for comment, the U.S. Embassy in Kyiv said that “NAA cadets have an informal relationship with the JMTG-U mission nations.” Per the Embassy, JMTG-U personnel are in an observation and consulting role when NAA cadets are trained by Ukrainian Armed Forces staff. Meanwhile, Colonel Robert Foster, Defense Attaché at the Canadian Embassy in Ukraine, described Canadian military trainers’ engagement with NAA cadets in the IPSC as limited.

Video, Photo Evidence Places Sonnenkreuz-Bearing “Military Order” inside the NAA

Since at least early 2018, the training and opportunities offered by the NAA (and Western governments supporting the Academy) to its cadets and trainees have also been available to Centuria, an organization comprised of Academy cadets and alumni that describes itself as a “military order” and has expressed the goal of reshaping Ukraine’s military along particular ideological lines.

The group’s extensive online presence—maintained via a succession of online accounts—has included ideological statements as well as updates about group activities and its apparent members. In what appears to have been a consistent effort to gain and maintain credibility and to attract new members, the group has posted unique videos and photos. Such materials have included videos and photos from events held by the group inside the NAA; images of Academy cadets posing with recognizable Centuria banners; photos and videos showing members wearing recognizable Centuria patches on the premises of the NAA; images of members participating in political events; and so on. The group has used several types of banners. One features the white nationalist [Sonnenkreuz](#) and [Wolfsangel](#) symbols and the organization’s slogan “Virtus et Honestas,” while another features a symbol reminiscent of crosshairs on a target in lieu of the Sonnenkreuz; the group might deem the latter safer to use inside the NAA. Centuria also apparently manipulated some photos it posted online, obscuring faces and changing the banner in the original photos to feature the Sonnenkreuz.

It is not just online that Centuria has projected the ability to freely operate in the Academy. In August 2020, a self-described member of Centuria spoke to a popular Ukrainian media outlet, *KP.ua*. *KP.ua*’s [article](#) stated that “Yuriy,” a self-described cadet of the NAA and veteran of the Azov Regiment (the Regiment is part of the National Guard of Ukraine, but combines this status with [its role as the military wing of the far-right Azov movement](#)), said that the NAA and the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine were both “aware of the Order’s existence and have not voiced any opposition to efforts to form an elite core of officers.” The article also quoted “Yuriy” as claiming that his group “worked” with several other military education institutions and AFU units.

“Yuriy” further told *KP.ua* that Centuria was founded after he left the Azov Regiment to pursue higher military education. “My friends and I thought we’d become officers and go back to Azov. But later we decided that we wanted to serve in the regular Ukrainian armed forces, propagandize our national values, and popularize officer aristocracy,” “Yuriy” reportedly explained.

“Yuriy’s” claims about his group’s activities effectively being allowed by the NAA and known to the AFU were made to distinguish his organization from another controversial and very public far-right entity that was receiving negative press at the time. On August 1, 2020, the street wing of the Azov movement, [previously known](#) as the “National Militia” (Ukrainian: *Національні дружини*), rebranded itself as Centuria and held a headline-grabbing [ceremony](#) that included hundreds of masked individuals and gun salutes. In a promotional video about the event produced by Azov, the newly rebranded organization’s leader, Ihor Mykhailenko, stated that the organization had to “attain victories over foreign enemies by grabbing territory” and needed to “defeat domestic enemies.”

It was against the backdrop of these statements that “Yuriy” sought to distance his own organization from the now extremely public group. “We’re trying to figure out who used our name and idea,” *KP.ua* quoted “Yuriy” as saying. Concurrently with “Yuriy’s” comments to *KP.ua*, Centuria also [published](#) a statement on its Telegram channel distinguishing itself from the newly launched organization of the

same name. According to *KP.ua*, a similar statement was published on the now-inaccessible Centuria Facebook page. The *KP.ua* reporter, who responded to the author's questions, said she contacted "Yuriy" using a phone number that appeared on the now-deleted Facebook page. She did not preserve the number. The *KP.ua* article did not include any fact-checking of Centuria's claims.

The *KP.ua* article also featured a denial by the Academy of Centuria's claims. "We don't have an organization like this. At least we have not received official requests to approve any such activity or events," the NAA spokesperson reportedly said. The General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine likewise denied the claims, telling the media outlet that "an organization like this couldn't have any relation to the Armed Forces and the time-honored military academy."

When the author approached NAA spokesman Anton Myronovych about Centuria's activities, he denied that the group operated within the institution and stated that the NAA's own investigation into the group's alleged activities had turned up no evidence of such activities.

When the author asked the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine via email if any probe had been made into media reports about Centuria's alleged activities within the Armed Forces of Ukraine, he received a response over the phone from another entity, the Armed Forces of Ukraine. Information officer Inna Malevych—despite seeming to feel that it was not they but the Ministry of Defense, our original addressee, who should be answering the question—nevertheless indicated that Ukraine's military considered allegations regarding Centuria to be baseless. "We believe that it's a fake and has no relation to the Army. The Army doesn't comment on fakes," Malevych said over the phone.

Contrary to these statements by the Ukrainian military and the NAA, the author was able to corroborate some of the group's claims about its presence and activities within the academy.

Although Centuria [continues to tout its activities](#) within the NAA, it is multimedia postings from its earlier Telegram channels that offer the most solid evidence of such presence, including events held by the group on the NAA premises. For instance, [a May 2019 post](#) dedicated to the group's first anniversary and the fifth anniversary of the Azov Regiment features a wintertime photo of a group of nearly two dozen uniformed individuals (their faces are blurred out in the photo) posing with the group's banner. Behind the individuals is one of the NAA's recognizable buildings on the Academy's premises.

"A year ago, fighters of the Centuria, whose core was formed by right volunteers and activists of national[ist] organizations, swore allegiance to our common cause, the end result of which is the creation of a new type of Armed Forces built on the foundation not only of officers' high professionalism, but also [their] reliable ideological backbone," the post read.

The author also discovered several social media posts dated June 2019 that show uniformed NAA cadets holding the Centuria banner on the premises of the NAA, apparently during that year's graduation festivities. These photos correspond to a contemporaneous Centuria post on Telegram that congratulated two "brothers in arms" of the group—identified by their call signs, "Wild" and "Slav"—on graduating from the NAA and featured a photo of a group of uniformed individuals, including one wearing a parade uniform, with a Centuria banner on the NAA premises. "You're the pride of the Nation that will lead Ukrainian troops and become the foundation of a new format of officers—nationally oriented and professional[...] Let us not allow the officers of the old class to take over the Armed Forces!" The photo was taken on the NAA premises next to the house of worship on campus.



Image above: A photo posted to Centuria's Telegram shows a group of uniformed men posing next to one of the buildings of the National Army Academy. The building is part of the NAA's campus in Lviv. It is possible that Centuria's manipulation of the original photo included a modification that changed the banner in the resulting image to feature a Sonnenkreuz as opposed to a symbol reminiscent of crosshairs on a target.

Image left: A 2019 photo posted to Centuria's Telegram congratulates "comrades" Slav (Ukrainian: Слов'янин) and Wild (Ukrainian: Дикуй) on graduating from the NAA. "Wild" is a call sign associated with NAA cadet Roman Rusnyk. The photo was taken on the NAA premises next to the on-campus house of worship. It is likely that Centuria's manipulation of the original photo included a modification that changed the banner in the resulting image to feature a Sonnenkreuz as opposed to a symbol reminiscent of crosshairs on a target.



Image: Screenshot of a June 2019 Instagram post made by then NAA Cadet Roman Rusnyk (wearing parade uniform in the photo) on his personal Instagram profile. The photo appears to closely match the one contemporaneously posted by Centuria, the difference being the symbol featured on the Centuria banner in the photo posted by Rusnyk, which seems to show a symbol reminiscent of crosshairs on a target as opposed to a Sonnenkreuz.

In his post, Rusnyk writes about receiving “officer rank.” The post also includes a photo of Rusnyk’s BA diploma from the NAA. The photo was taken on the NAA premises next to the on-campus house of worship. Left to right: Vladyslav Chuguenko, unidentified individual, Yuriy Gavrylyshyn, Roman Rusnyk, Mykhailo Alfanov, Danylo Tikhomirov, and Oleksandr Gryshkin (Gryshkin is the last name associated with the individual’s mother, per social media).

The individual wearing the parade uniform in Centuria’s Telegram post is Roman Rusnyk, a 2019 graduate of the NAA, according to a photo of his diploma he posted to Instagram. Around the same time as Centuria’s post, Rusnyk posted a similar photo, showing him with a group of individuals holding Centuria’s banner, to his personal Instagram.

Apparently, the image posted by Rusnyk is the original, albeit cropped, of the photo that was also used by Centuria. Side by side comparison of the images posted by Centuria and Rusnyk seems to reveal that Centuria manipulated the original photo to have the banner in the resulting image feature a Sonnenkreuz as opposed to a symbol reminiscent of crosshairs on a target that is seen in the photo posted by Rusnyk. Other Centuria manipulations included blurring out faces visible in the apparent original.

Rusnyk’s Instagram caption includes the white supremacist “14/88” [numerical symbols](#) as part of the phrase “14/88 демократию приносим!!!” (Russian for “14/88 we bring democracy!!!”).



Image: A screenshot of a June 2019 Instagram post by then NAA Cadet Roman Rusnyk shows Rusnyk's BA diploma from the NAA.



Image: Screenshot of a June 2019 Instagram post by then NAA cadet Roman Rusnyk (wearing parade uniform). In his post, Rusnyk writes about receiving "officer rank." The NAA's main building is clearly seen in the background. The photo shows a banner featuring a symbol reminiscent of crosshairs on a target as opposed to a Sonnenkreuz. On the left is Vladyslav Chuguenko who has a look-alike brother whose name is Stanyslav. On the right is NAA cadet Serhiy Vasylechko who contemporaneously used the same photo in an Instagram post congratulating Rusnyk on graduating from the NAA.

In the same vein, various social media posts show NAA cadets on its premises wearing recognizable Centuria patches that feature the group’s symbol, the Sonnenkreuz. For example, one May 2019 Instagram [post](#) shows a group of NAA cadets wearing uniforms corresponding to their service branches or NAA tracksuits. They are posing on the Academy’s “Artillery Alley” next to a recognizable missile launcher. Centuria patches are visible on at least five members of the 12-strong group. The author of the post, who is himself seen in the photo, included the hashtag #центурия (Russian for Centuria) in the Instagram post.



Image: Photo posted to Instagram by an apparent Centuria member, Yevhen Romanchenko (far right), shows individuals with Centuria patches on the premises of the Academy. The photo was taken on the Academy’s “Artillery Alley” and the post includes the hashtag #центурия. Notably, Romanchenko’s own [Instagram profile picture](#), taken during a 2019 political rally, shows Romanchenko sporting a Centurian patch.

Not only did the group have photo opps at the NAA, but evidence confirms that it also held events on the premises of the Academy. Per Centuria’s Telegram posts, one such event was apparently held in July 2018. The posts alleged that members of the group (identified by their unique call signs) held a “Pride of the Nation”-themed lecture for NAA cadets. The posts about the event described it as “grandiose” and as being met with enthusiasm by cadets. Along with several photos, the posts dedicated to the event included a nearly 3-minute video. The video shows a group of six young men (four uniformed and wearing NAA patches, two dressed casually and wearing Centuria patches) leading a group of nearly 30 uniformed cadets in a recitation of the “Prayer of the Ukrainian Nationalist,” a pre-Second World War ideological text written by Josef Mashchak, a leader of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), that has gained increased prominence since 2014, when it began to be incorporated into events held by armed groups linked to the far right, including the Azov Regiment. The prayer is addressed to “Ukraine, saint mother of heroes” and begs for “sweet

CENTURIA

2 липня, члени ордену CENTURIA Скіф, Святий та Лірик провели грандіозну лекцію на тему "Гордість Нації". Курсанти НАСВ з захватом слухали слова наших побратимів.. Цим заходом, лектори підкреслили важливість просвітництва серед нового покоління курсантів, які ставши офіцерами зможуть вершити майбутнє армії. Кульмінацією заходу, стало спільне прочитання молитви українського націоналіста, членами ордену та курсантів НАСВ, чим змогли зачепити гарячі серця майбутньої генерації українського офіцераства.

352 Мілан, 4:41 AM

CENTURIA



death in torture for your [Ukraine's] sake." According to comments made to the author by the [historian](#) John-Paul Himka, "the creation of this prayer, which mentions neither God nor the Mother of God, was a byproduct of the nationalists' jettisoning of Christianity and its restrictive morality." Himka added that it was "unsettling" to see the prayer making a comeback in Ukraine.

Image: Screenshot of Centuria Telegram post about a "Pride of the Nation"-themed lecture held by Centuria members for NAA cadets. The post identifies three participating Centuria members by their call signs: Scythian (Ukrainian: Скіф), Saint (Ukrainian: Святий), and Lyricist (Ukrainian: Лірик). The latter call sign has been used for years by 2021 NAA graduate Kyrylo Dubrovskyyi, who attended the UK's Royal Military Academy Sandhurst for an 11-month training course in 2019-2020. The posts about the event also included a high-quality video from which several Centuria members can be identified. An individual resembling Dubrovskyyi is seen in the video.

Photos and videos show that the recitation took place inside a large room whose appearance and furnishings are consistent with the appearance of the NAA barracks available to cadets (as seen in

photos of the barracks posted online and on social media). “Members of Centuria take the ideological education of cadets upon themselves,” read the post that featured the video of the recitation.



Image: A still from the video posted to Centuria’s Telegram shows the individuals leading NAA cadets in the “Prayer of the Ukrainian Nationalist.” From left: Yuriy Gavrylyshyn, Illya Boyko, Kyrylo Dubrovskiy, and Danylo Tikhomirov.

The prayer video is of remarkably high quality and, in combination with the call signs provided in the posts, allowed for the identification of Centuria members at the event.



Image: A still from the video posted to Centuria’s Telegram shows NAA cadets, led by members of Centuria, reciting the “Prayer of the Ukrainian Nationalist.”

Another Centuria Telegram post shows the group's activities inside what appears to be an NAA classroom. That post describes another "Pride of the Nation"-themed lecture for NAA cadets that allegedly took place in December 2018.



Image: Post to Centuria's Telegram about the "Pride of the Nation"-themed lecture for NAA cadets that allegedly took place in December 2018.

CENTURIA

Соратники руху CENTURIA активно беруть участь у націонал-патріотичному вихованні майбутніх українських офіцерів. 16 грудня 2018 року представники CENTURIA провели лекцію на тему "Гордість Нації" для курсантів Національної академії сухопутних військ імені гетьмана Петра Сагайдачного, розташованої у Львові.

Крім лекційного матеріалу, соратники руху CENTURIA подарували курсантам екземпляри книги Миколи Сціборського "Націократія" і відомі журнали "Національна оборона". Лекція завершилася спільним прочитанням Молитви Українського Націоналіста.

Наш рух і далі планує вносити свій вклад в формування молодого, вихованого в національному дусі покоління українського офіцерства, яке надалі послужить основою нової армії, здатної надійно стояти на захисті кордонів Української Держави.

[#CENTURIA_action](#) [#CENTURIA_info](#)

👁 1104 Глáv..., edited 11:14 AM

Image: Post to Centuria's Telegram about the "Pride of the Nation"-themed lecture for NAA cadets that allegedly took place in December 2018.

The post includes:

- A photo of a uniformed speaker in front of a seated group of uniformed cadets who are looking at what looks like a PowerPoint presentation projected over a distinctive large poster of a truck-mounted multi-missile launcher. The poster fills a distinctive arch-like niche in the wall. The projected image reads "Pride of the Nation," with the text superimposed over visuals of an armed and uniformed group of soldiers. The Centuria banner is also visible in the photo. The classroom itself looks very similar to one featured in photos posted to social media by NAA cadets in 2021. The apparent differences between the two sets of photos may be because new carpeting has been installed in the room since 2018.



Image: Photo posted to Centuria's Telegram. A video is being projected over a screen placed on a wall that bears a recognizable poster. Other elements of the room, like the arched niches in the wall, are also recognizable. It is likely that Centuria's manipulation of the original photo included a modification that changed the banner to feature a Sonnenkreuz as opposed to a symbol reminiscent of the crosshairs on a target.



Image: A side-by-side comparison of a photo (left) posted to social media by an NAA cadet and a vertically-flipped Centuria photo from what looks, save for the carpeting, like the same room.

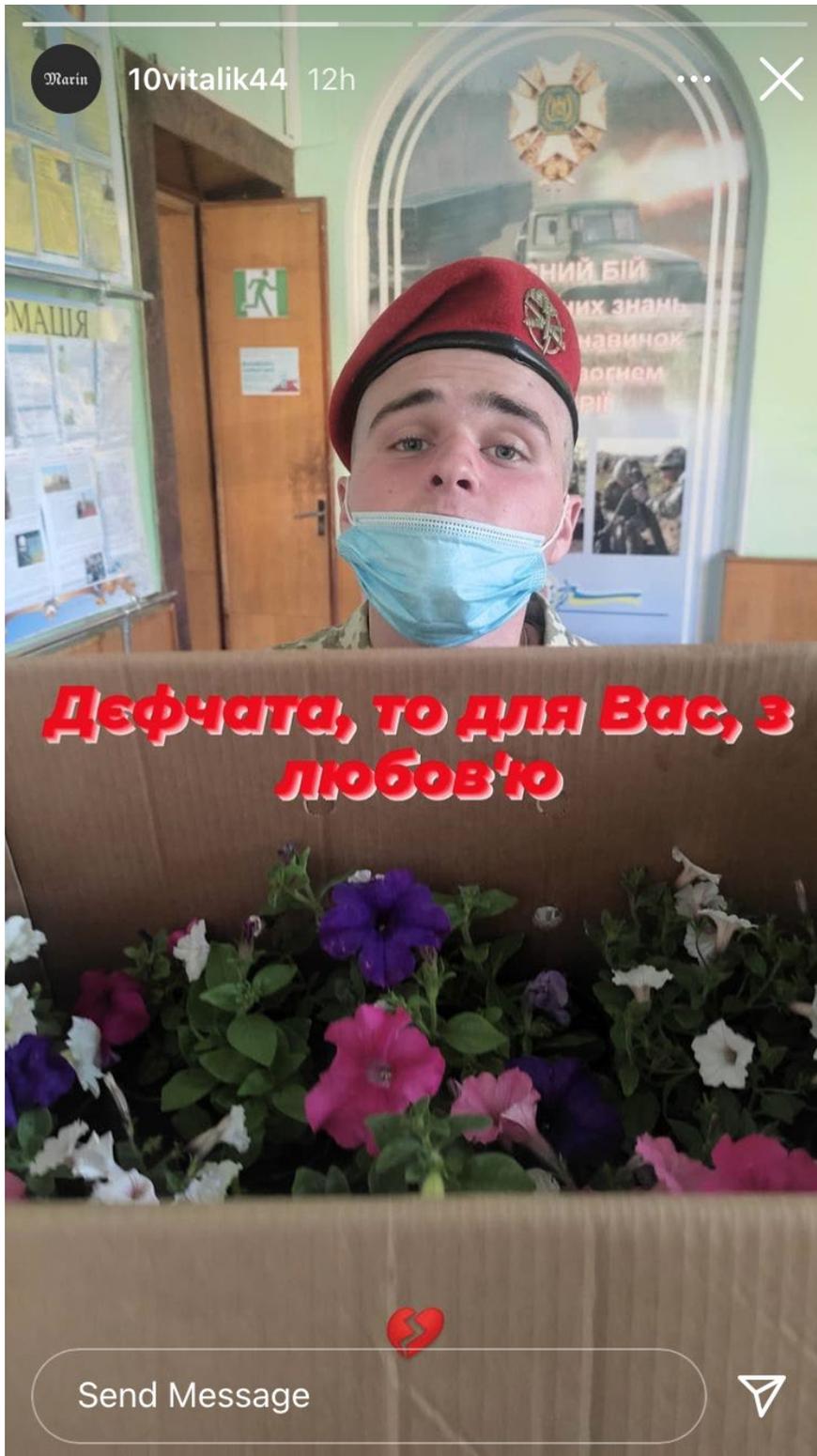


Image: A photo posted by an NAA cadet to social media shows the same poster in an arched niche as is seen in a photo posted by Centuria.

- A photo taken inside a distinctive classroom showing Centuria’s symbol projected over a white cloth covering an emblem painted on the wall. The visible silhouette of the emblem is consistent with emblems used by the NAA to designate its faculties and departments. Additionally, above the emblem, we see the Ukrainian text “28-Навчальний Курс” (28th training course), which apparently comprises part of the emblem. The term “[numbered] training course(s)” is used in the NAA’s publicly available [documents](#) and news items on the NAA’s site to refer to a particular education specialization within the NAA. NAA cadets are often referred to as cadets of a particular (numbered) training course. For example, [this](#) 2019 NAA news item dedicated to cadets’ participation in athletic activities mentions specific (numbered) training courses next to names of cadets, including, in this particular case, the 28th training course as well as the 44th, 14th, etc., training courses. Thus, the “28th training course” text painted on the wall of the auditorium seen in the photo apparently indicates that the auditorium in question was used for the “28th training course” on a regular basis.

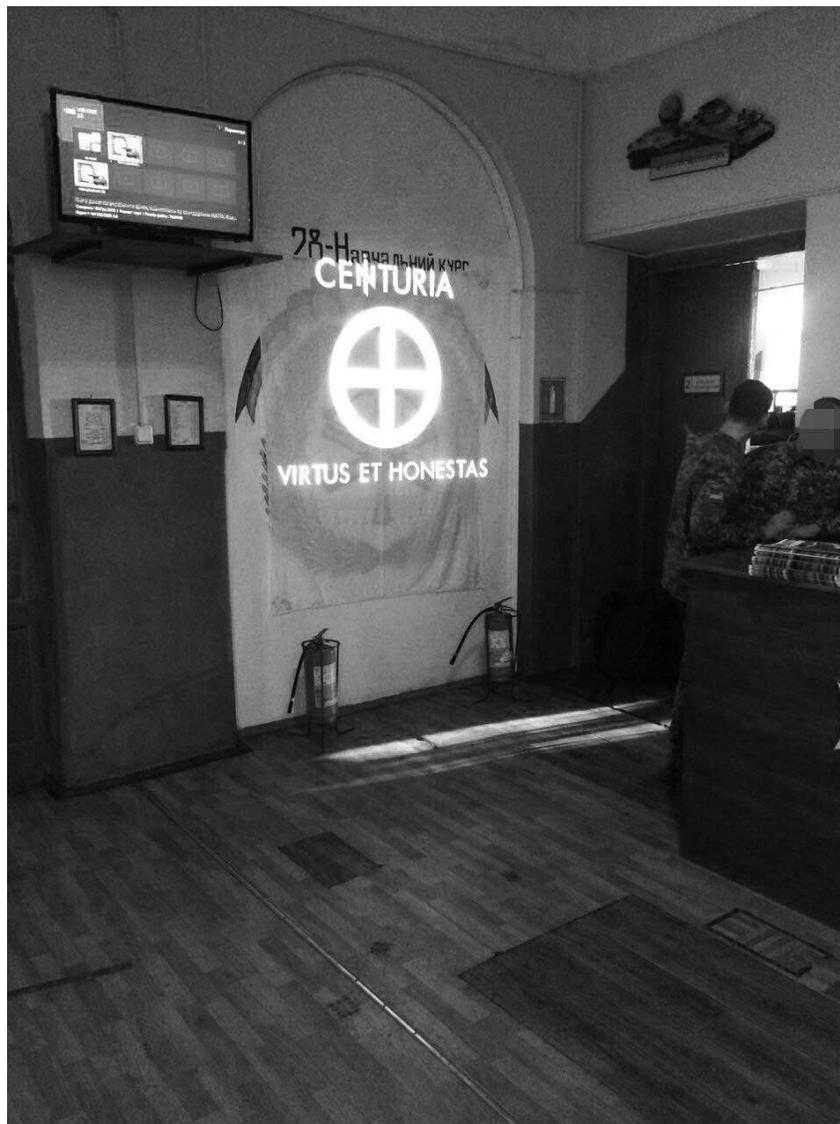
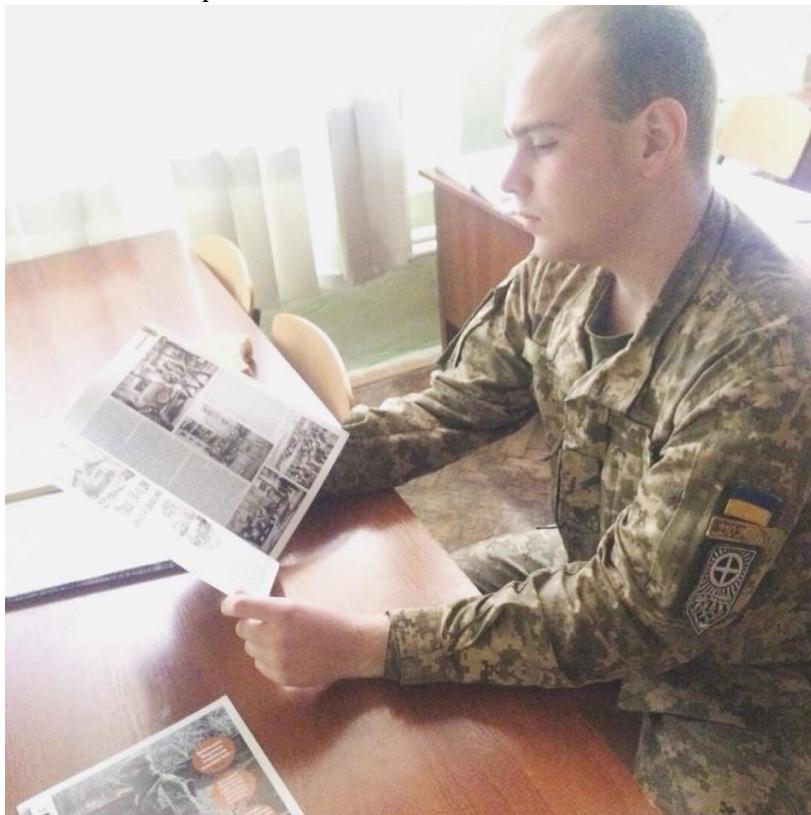


Image: Photo posted to Centuria’s Telegram. An image is projected onto a screen that has been placed over a distinct symbol. There is also recognizable writing on the wall that reads “28th training course.”

During the alleged event, per the post, Centuria disseminated copies of the book [Націократія \(English: Natiocracy\)](#) and the *Національна оборона* (English: National Defense) magazine. The former is an ideological text by Mykola Stsiborskyi (1897 - August 30, 1941), theorist of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN). The text has been actively [promoted](#) in recent years by the far-right Azov movement and is central to the ideology of that organization. Natiocracy is [defined](#) by the National Corps party, the political wing of the Azov movement, as “a state regime implemented by the government of all socially useful layers [of society].” [Speaking](#) about the “Natiocracy 2.0” (Ukrainian: Націократія 2.0) ideology in early 2021, the Azov’s movement leading ideologist, Mykola Kravchenko, linked it to the work of Stsiborskyi and blamed democracy and universal suffrage for the current crisis of the nation-state in the West. Per Kravchenko, Natiocracy 2.0 prescribes “that civil rights are acquired according to a certain merit system and not by birth right alone” and “may become the algorithm for the rescue of the Western civilization.” The *National Defense* magazine is sponsored by the Azov Regiment, the military wing of the Azov movement.

Both the books and the magazines can be seen in another photo included in the post—that of a group of uniformed cadets next to a book stand. “Our movement plans to further contribute to the shaping of young Ukrainian officers raised in national spirit,” the post reads. The tie to *Національна оборона* (English: National Defense) was a recurring motif for the group, which posted about disseminating the Azov-linked magazine and emphasized its connection to the Azov Regiment on a number of occasions.

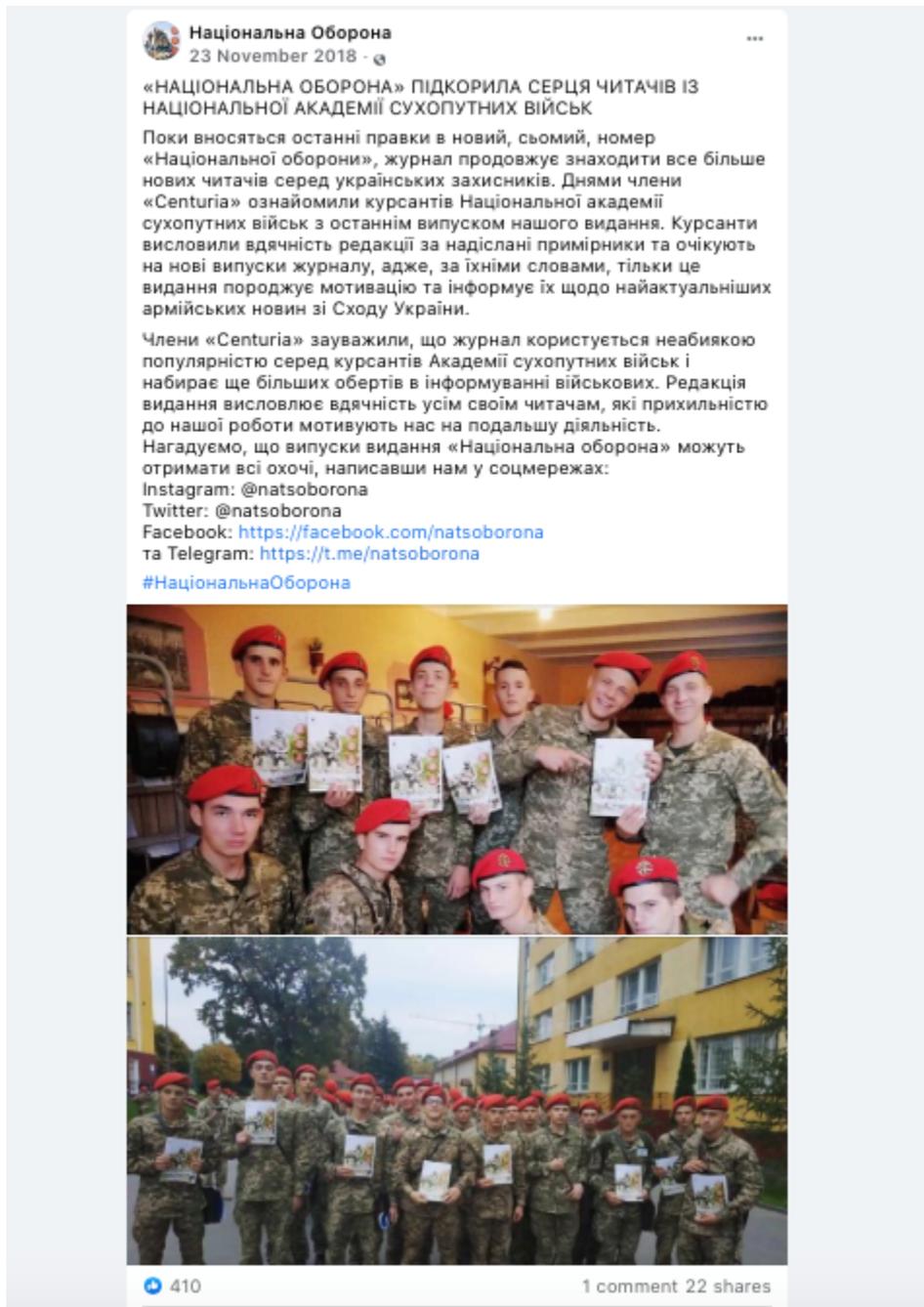
The evidence of Centuria’s presence in the NAA is not limited to self-incriminating posts. The *Національна оборона* (English: National Defense) magazine promoted by the group furnished contemporaneous corroboration of Centuria’s claims regarding its presence within the NAA in its 2018 Facebook posts.



*Image: Photo from a post by the Azov-linked *Національна оборона* (English: National Defense) magazine. The individual in the photo is likely Nazar Livenets. When reached for comment, Livenets denied any knowledge of Centuria. Note the Centuria patch on the individual’s upper arm.*

In May 2018 the magazine [wrote](#) on Facebook about its dissemination within the Academy. The post specifically mentioned that “members of Centuria” had praised the magazine. The post included photos apparently taken inside the NAA’s library, including of several uniformed individuals, one of whom wore a Centuria patch.

In November of the same year, *Національна оборона* (English: National Defense) [credited](#) “members of ‘Centuria’” with “introducing cadets of the National Army Academy” to the magazine’s most recent issue. That post included photos of dozens of NAA cadets holding issues of the magazine. Notably, the same post [also appeared](#) on the same date on the VK page of the Azov Regiment of Ukraine’s National Guard.



*Image: Screenshot of a Facebook post by the *Національна оборона* (English: National Defense) magazine that mentions Centuria.*

In addition, although Centuria was not explicitly mentioned, key members of the organization appeared in a February 2018 Facebook [post](#) by *Національна оборона* (English: National Defense) that described the introduction of the magazine to the academy. The post featured a photo of patched NAA cadets, including two Centuria members, apparently taken inside the Academy.



*Image: Screenshot of a Facebook post by the *Національна оборона* (English: National Defense) magazine. The bottom right photo shows several apparent members of Centuria.*

The Group's Apparent Leadership: Ties to the Far-Right Azov Movement and Role in the NAA

The aforementioned prayer video, taken at an event that apparently took place in July 2018, provided a clear view of the individuals leading the NAA cadets in a recitation of the nationalistic text, including two casually dressed individuals wearing Centuria patches. In the summer of 2019, the same duo could be seen leading Centuria during its sole admitted public appearance outside NAA walls—at the March of the Millennium of the Ukrainian State (Ukrainian: *Марш тисячоліття Української держави*) on June 30, 2019, in Lviv. The march was held jointly by the Ukrainian far-right parties National Corps, Right Sector, and Freedom (Ukrainian: *Свобода*), which would run on a joint Svoboda ballot in the Ukrainian parliamentary election of July 21.



*Image: Photo posted by Centuria on Telegram showing the group at the March of the Millennium of the Ukrainian State (Ukrainian: *Марш тисячоліття Української держави*) on June 30, 2019, in Lviv.*

The event, which brought together thousands of participants, saw Centuria quite literally reveal its face to the world. A group of about a dozen men marched under the Sonnenkreuz banner, sporting Centuria patches on the sleeves of their matching black shirts. “In a tightly-welded column and shoulder to shoulder with our brethren activists of the National Corps, Svoboda, Right Sector, and

other right organizations, fighters of Centuria marched to the center of ancient Lviv,” the group wrote of its participation in the event in a [contemporaneous Telegram post](#) that included multiple photos of the group’s members with their faces blurred out. But while the group took steps to obscure the faces of its members in the photos it posted on Telegram, it had no control over media reports of the event. In particular, the group was filmed by the National Corps party, which [livestreamed the event](#).



Image: Photo posted by Centuria on Telegram showing the group at the March of the Millennium of the Ukrainian State (Ukrainian: Марш тисячоліття Української держави) on June 30, 2019, in Lviv.

Although the quality of the video is uneven, it—in combination with the high-quality 2018 prayer video, important details revealed in Centuria’s online posts (unique call signs and roles of members), and photos from the event posted by apparent Centuria members to their personal social media accounts—allowed the author to identify the group’s apparent core members and leaders using various open-source investigation techniques and tools.

Our findings point to two NAA cadets and possible alumni, 27-year-old Yuriy Gavrylyshyn (Ukrainian: Юрій Гаврилишин) and 24-year-old Danylo Tikhomirov (Ukrainian: Данило Тихоміров), as likely leaders of Centuria. Under their known respective call signs, “Milan” and “Moriak” (Ukrainian for “sailor”), they were often mentioned by Centuria in its earlier online presence, including descriptions of Gavrylyshyn under his call sign “Milan” as a “member of the leadership” of “Centuria” and of Tikhomirov as “a brother in the order.” The two appeared both in the 2018 prayer video and at the 2019 nationalistic march, and continue to be involved with Centuria. Neither man returned requests

for comment sent to the email addresses associated with their respective social media. However, the author obtained a comment from a Telegram account apparently associated with Gavrylyshyn stating that Centuria was not “an incarnation of radicals.” That Telegram did not deny being run by Gavrylyshyn.

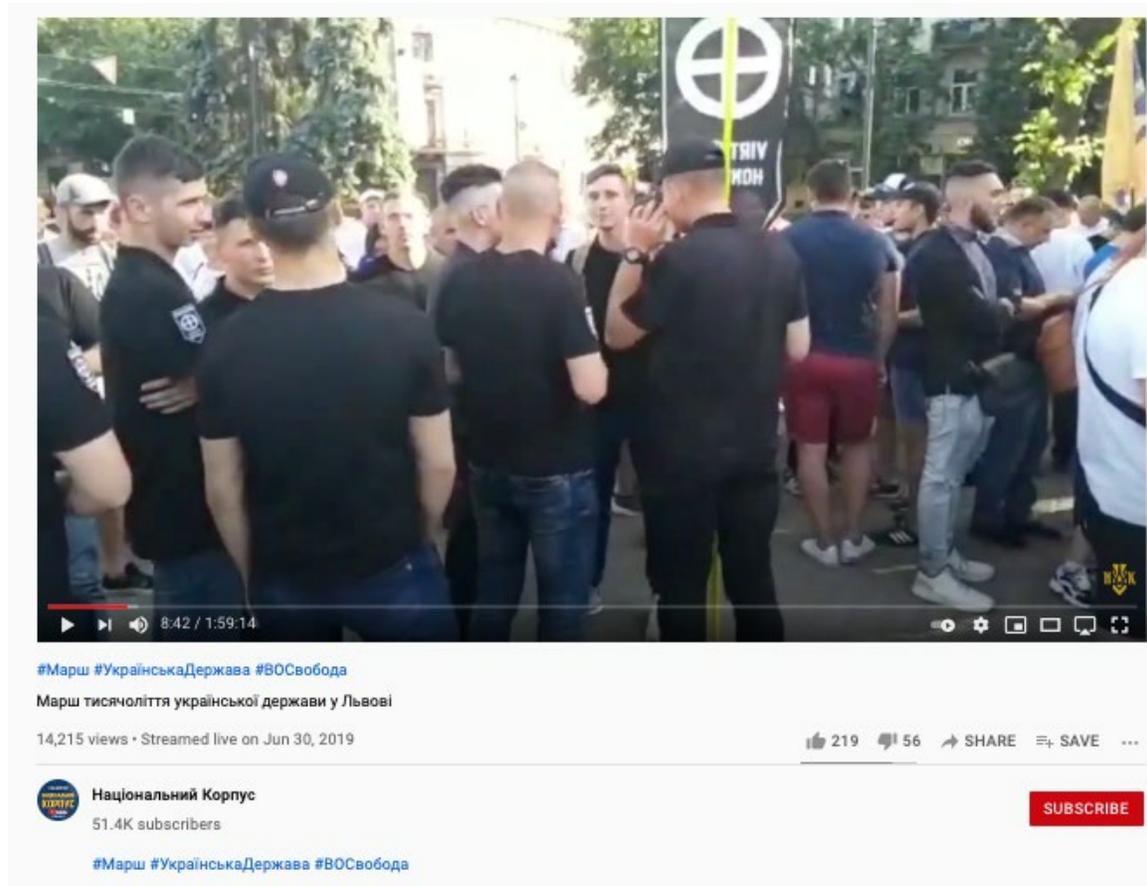


Image: A still from the video that was livestreamed by the National Corps party, the political wing of the Azov movement, shows Centuria at the March of the Millennium of the Ukrainian State (Ukrainian: Марш тисячоліття Української держави) on June 30, 2019, in Lviv. The video clearly shows the group under a banner featuring the Sonnenkreuz symbol, whereas, as mentioned earlier, some photos posted by Centuria on Telegram may have been manipulated to change a symbol reminiscent of crosshairs on a target to a Sonnenkreuz.

Although it is unclear when exactly the two commenced or completed/will complete their studies in the NAA, both men [appear](#) in the aforementioned 2018 February Facebook post by the Azov-linked *Національна оборона* (English: National Defense) magazine dedicated to its promotion within the NAA, which strongly suggests that both were already cadets of the Academy at the time. Some photos posted by Tikhomirov on his VK page suggest that the two men could have been NAA cadets as early as 2017.



Image: Photo posted to VK by apparent Centuria leader Yuriy Gavrylyshyn clearly shows himself (center) with Danylo Tikhomirov to his right and Yevhen Romachenko to his left.

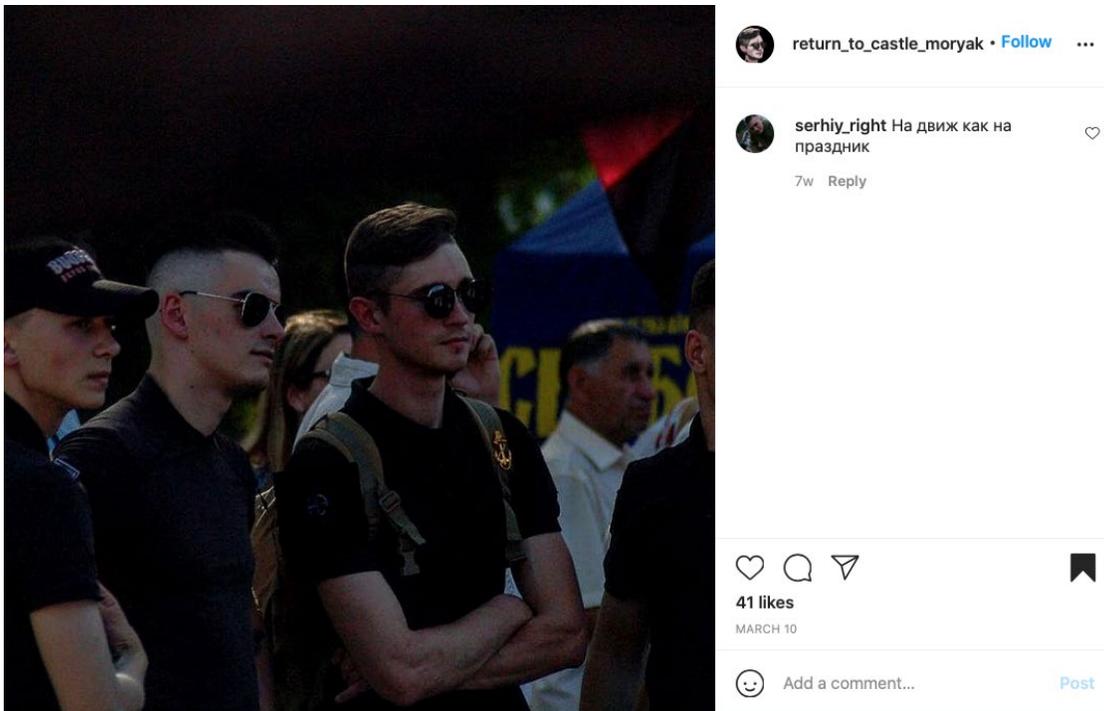


Image: Screenshot of a social media post by Danylo Tikhomirov (center) standing next to Yuriy Gavrylyshyn (second from left) and Serhiy Vasylechko (far left). Vasylechko left a comment under the post that reads “[showing up] to the event like it’s a holiday.”



yevgen.romanchenko

Follow



77 posts

408 followers

244 following

Yevgenii Romanchenko

Personal Blog

Image: Screenshot of the Instagram profile picture of Yevhen Romanchenko (left). The profile picture is a photo from the 2019 far-right rally in which Centuria participated. The Centuria banner is visible in the photo, which was taken next to the Stepan Bandera monument in Lviv. On the right in the photo is Illya Boyko.



illyaboyko

Follow



22 posts

244 followers

668 following

Ілля Бойко

انا عبد عيسى المسيح

twitter.com/CaloreusRex?s=09

Image: Screenshot of the Instagram profile picture of Illya Boyko. The profile picture is a photo from the 2019 far-right rally in which Centuria participated. The photo was taken next to the Stepan Bandera monument in Lviv.

Although the NAA refused to provide any information regarding the current status of Gavrylyshyn and Tikhomirov in the Academy on the grounds that such information was sensitive and could not be shared without their consent, both Gavrylyshyn and Tikhomirov appear on the NAA's site with the head of the Faculty of Missile Forces and Artillery (Ukrainian: *Факультет ракетних військ і артилерії*), Colonel Artem Dzyuba (Ukrainian: *Артем Дзюба*), in one of the photographs accompanying [an article](#) dedicated to "moral-psychological support" work (Ukrainian: *Морально-психологічне забезпечення*) at that faculty. As the NAA's article makes clear, such "support" includes the ideological indoctrination of the faculty's students.

Gavrylyshyn and Tikhomirov's affiliation with the Faculty of Missile Forces and Artillery is corroborated by social media photos, posted over the span of several years, that show the two men in uniforms with the characteristic red berets adorned with an emblem depicting two crossed cannons hit by a bolt of lightning. Additionally, Gavrylyshyn, on his now-inaccessible Facebook page, openly stated that he was part of the "class of 2019" in the Academy and was studying "command of artillery units." On his Facebook profile, Gavrylyshyn, who revealed his full name, also stated that he was with the Azov Regiment from July 2014 until August 2016, followed by an alleged stint in the AFU's 10th Mountain Assault Brigade from April until August 2017 and enrollment in the NAA.



Image: Photo posted to the NAA site shows Centuria figures Yuriy Gavrylyshyn (on the left in the front row) and Danylo Tikhomirov (second from right in the middle row) next to the head of the Faculty of Missile Forces and Artillery (Ukrainian: Факультет ракетних військ і артилерії), Colonel Artem Dzyuba (center).



Yurii Gavrylyshyn

WORK



10 Гірсько- Штурмова Бригада

старший оператор

April 9, 2017 - August 10, 2017

Kolomyya



Battaglione Azov

командир відділення , відділення зв'язку
мінометної батареї

July 20, 2014 - August 1, 2016

EDUCATION



Національна академія сухопутних військ імені гетьмана Петра Сагайдачного

Управління діями артилерійських підрозділів
Class of 2019



Коломийський медичний коледж ім.Івана Франка

Лікувальна справа. Фельдшер

September 1, 2009 - March 3, 2013

Image: A screenshot of the now-deleted Facebook profile of Yuriy Gavrylyshyn.

The details of Gavrylyshyn's biography revealed on his social media and corroborated in several media reports match those of the "Yuriy" who talked to *KP.ua* on behalf of Centuria in August 2020 and of the "Milan" mentioned in Centuria's online posts. "Milan" is a call sign that has been associated with Gavrylyshyn in a number of media reports over the years. Gavrylyshyn, then a 20-year-old, was introduced as "Milan" [in a March 2015 video](#) report about fighting in Ukraine posted to the Azov Regiment's YouTube channel. In the video, Gavrylyshyn explained that he was living in Milan, Italy (a biographical element that he admitted determined his call sign), with his family in 2013 but traveled to Ukraine first to join the Maidan revolution and again—after briefly returning to Italy post-Maidan—to participate in the war in Donbass. The video included an introduction of Gavrylyshyn by a fellow fighter who said that Gavrylyshyn "participated in all the fighting the Azov Regiment was part of."

Gavrylyshyn also appeared [in an April 2015 video report](#) by the ZIK TV channel about the Azov Regiment fighting in Shyrokyne. Another [video report](#), posted on the Azov Regiment's YouTube channel in November 2015, is devoted exclusively to Gavrylyshyn. "Here [in the Azov Regiment] I met [...] lots of guys with whom I'd like to cooperate further. Without a doubt I'll pursue a military career," he said in the video.

Gavrylyshyn's profile on the Russian social media network VK, discovered by the author, features multiple photos of his service with the Azov Regiment and a remarkable video of an apparent comedy skit that seemingly shows Gavrylyshyn donning a T-shirt with a prominent white supremacist Celtic Cross symbol and the slogan "White Pride World Wide."

Gavrylyshyn's involvement with the Azov movement went beyond fighting with the Azov Regiment. According to [contemporaneous VK posts](#) by a chapter of the far-right National Corps party in Gavrylyshyn's native Ivano-Frankivsk region, in November 2015 he participated in a propaganda event organized by the party for students of a local college. The National Corps chapter separately

posted [a video](#) of the event that shows Gavrylyshyn talking to students about the ambitions of the Azov Regiment. “[Commander of the Azov Regiment Andriy Biletsky] wants Azov to become the backbone of Ukraine,” he said at one point.

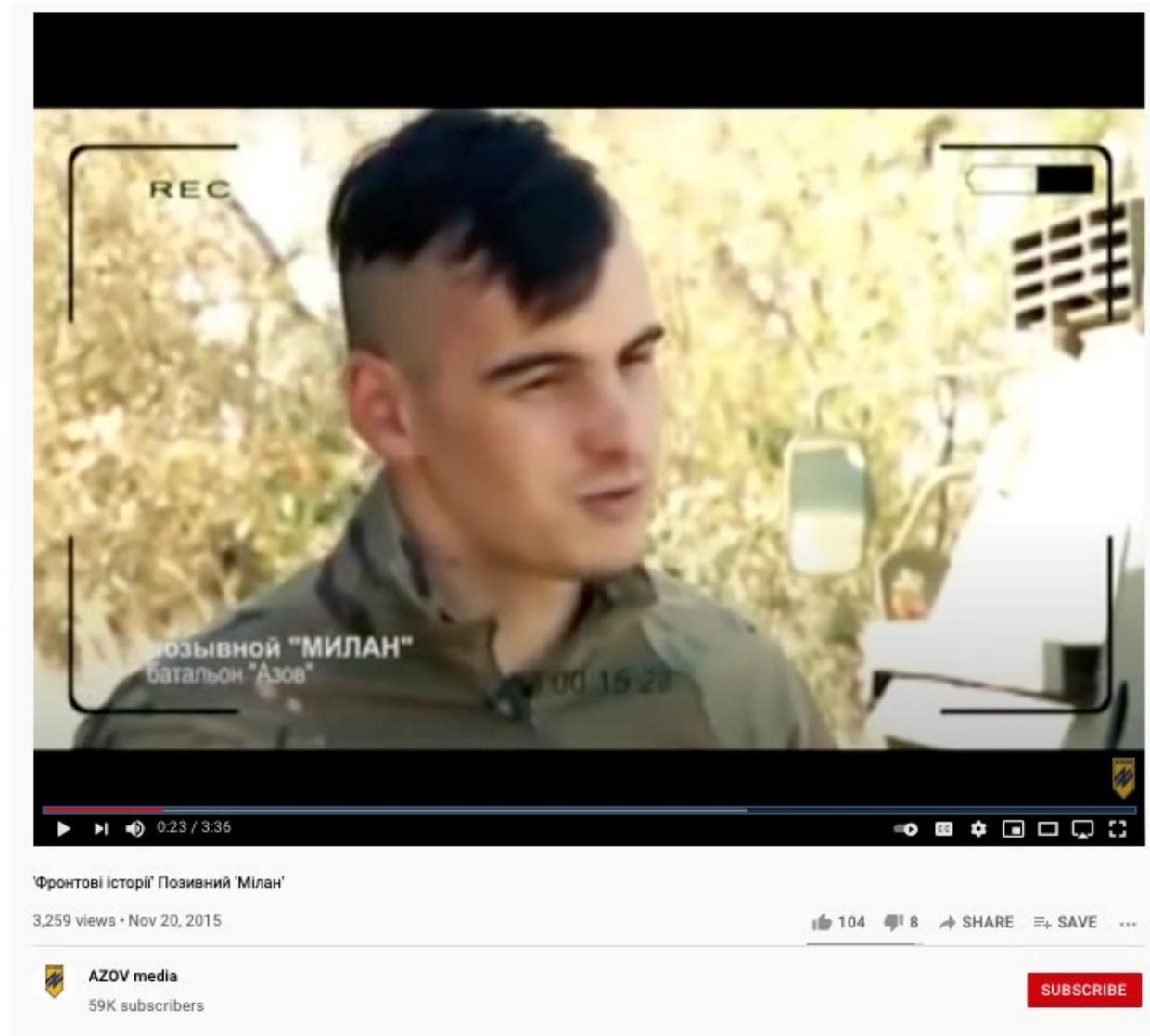


Image: A screenshot of a video posted to the Azov Regiment's YouTube page shows Yuriy Gavrylyshyn under his call sign "Milan."

Less is known with certainty about his fellow leading Centuria figure, Tikhomirov. Tikhomirov has seemingly consistently used the moniker "Dmytro Klinyuk" (Ukrainian: *Дмитро Клинюк*) over the course of many years, both for his prolific online presence, which is spread between a number of social media platforms, and in [media appearances](#) related to his nationalist activism in his native city of Mariupol circa 2014-2015. (Note that the surname Klinyuk is associated with part of Tikhomirov's family.)

Tikhomirov's own social media and posts by his family members paint a picture of an individual intimately involved for many years with the far-right Azov movement. "Proud of my grandson Daniil

[Russian for Danylo], who 5 years ago, when separatism in Mariupol began to grab power, wasn't afraid to rise against a horde of separatists even though he was only a 17-year-old kid. Because of this, commander of the [Azov] Regiment Biletsky respects him," a relative [wrote](#) about Tikhomirov in a comment under the relative's own September 2018 Facebook post, which featured a photograph of Tikhomirov and Gavrylyshyn wearing the uniforms and red berets of the Missile Forces and Artillery while posing with the leader of the far-right Azov movement, Andriy Biletsky, whose hand rested on Tikhomirov's shoulder.

In response to the author's inquiry about Tikhomirov and Centuria, Tikhomirov's relative, Viktor Klynyuk, wrote that Tikhomirov was "the founder of that party."



Image: Photo posted to Facebook by Viktor Klynyuk, a relative of Danylo Tikhomirov, shows Tikhomirov (right) and Gavrylyshyn (left) with the leader of the internationally active Azov Movement, Andriy Biletsky (center).

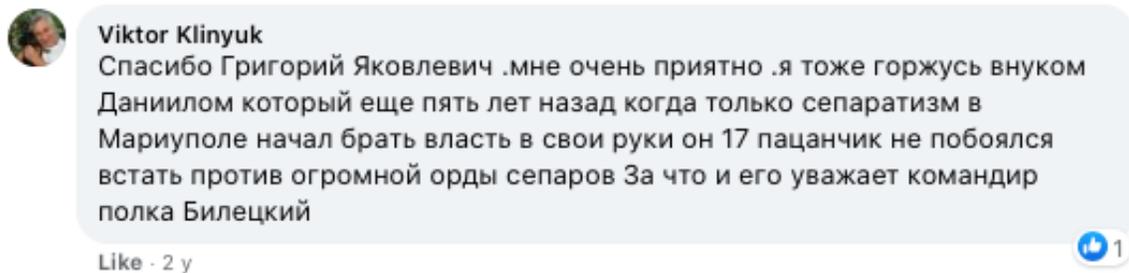


Image: Screenshot of a Facebook comment by Viktor Klynyuk providing some background regarding Danylo Tikhomirov.

Tikhomirov expressed gratitude to the Azov Regiment for instilling in him "resolve and discipline" in [an April 2017 VK post](#) that shows him standing between lines of bunk beds wearing a T-shirt with symbols associated with the regiment. Tikhomirov's social media features numerous photos of him posing with firearms, wearing military fatigues, wearing Azov insignia, [taking part in paramilitary](#)

[training](#) organized by the Azov movement in Mariupol in 2015, and much more. His comment under a [photo](#) posted in September 2016 that shows him with a firearm and wearing a tactical vest seems to suggest that he was at some point involved with Right Sector. Other social media posts [suggest](#) Tikhomirov's early involvement with the predecessor of Azov's National Corps party, Civic Corps Azov.



Dmitry Klinyuk
22 Apr 2017

Спасибо, АЗОВ, за выдержку и дисциплину!



Батальон АЗОВ — МОЛИТВА УКРАЇНСЬКОГО НАЦІОНАЛІС...

3:26

Image: Screenshot of a VK post by Danylo Tikhomirov.

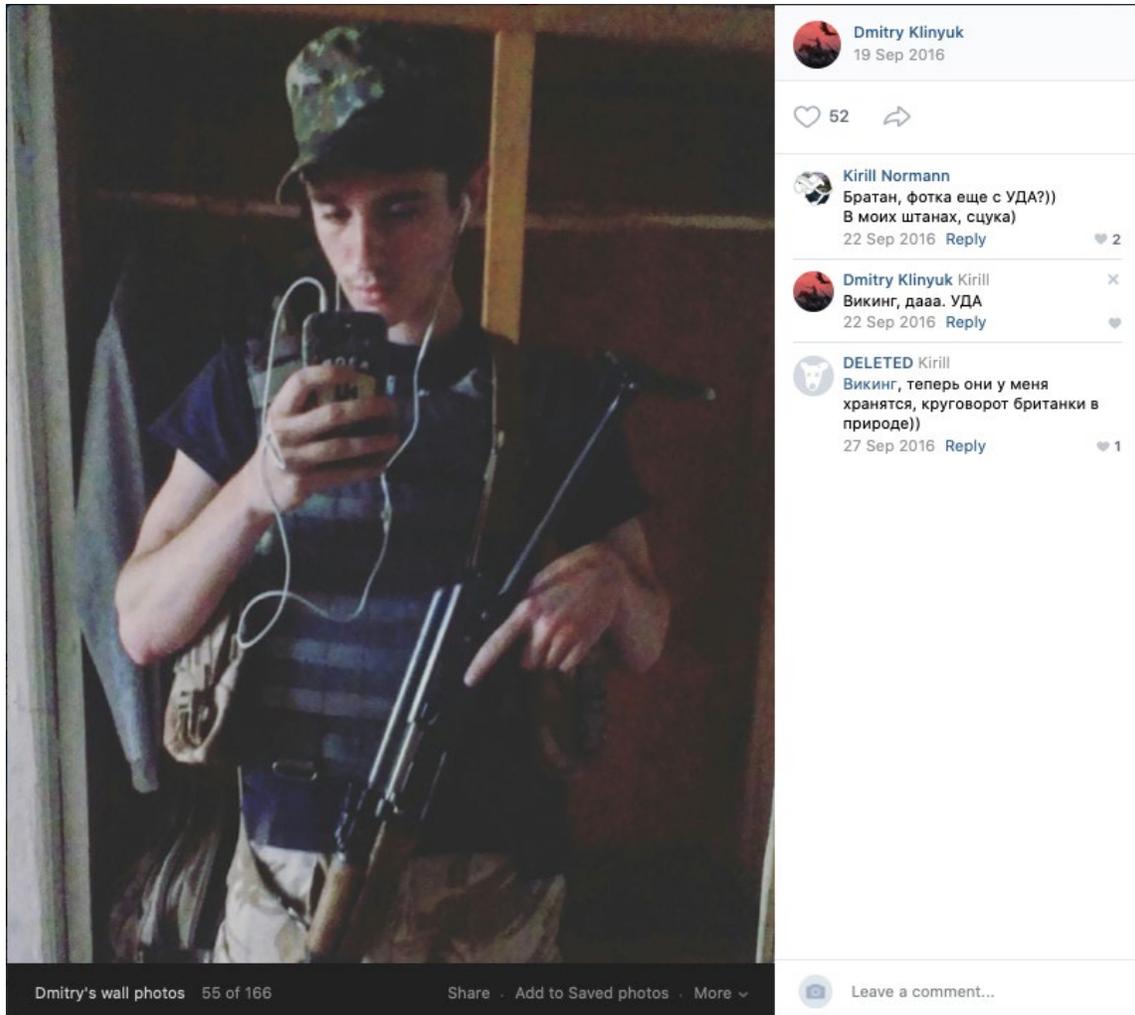


Image: Screenshot of a VK post by Danylo Tikhomirov.

The Azov Regiment did not respond to a request to comment on Tikhomirov and Gavrylyshyn's past and current involvement with the Regiment, alleged contacts between Azov and Centuria, etc.

Both Gavrylyshyn and Tikhomirov might be among the NAA's best cadets. In June 2019 Centuria [posted photos](#) of the pair (seemingly recognizable although photographed from one side) apparently receiving commemorative plaques or diplomas from the Academy's Chief, Lt. Gen. Pavlo Tkachuk. Continuing the pattern of touting Centuria's ability to operate openly within the NAA, the Telegram post said that members of the group had participated that month in a high-profile international scientific conference (Ukrainian: *Людина і техніка у визначних битвах світових воєн XX століття*), where they had co-organized a section on Ukrainian volunteer units. The conference by that name took place in the NAA on June 25, 2019, and, according to a Facebook [post](#) by the NAA's Chief, participants included representatives of multiple Polish military education institutions. In his post Tkachuk thanked the then-Consul General of Poland in Lviv, Rafal Wolski, and others for their contribution. The post includes [a group photograph](#) of participants that seems to show both Tikhomirov and Gavrylyshyn with plaques in their hands.



Image: Screenshot of a photo from a Centuria Telegram post. In it, the NAA Chief is apparently handing Danylo Tikhomirov a commemorative plaque.



Image: Screenshot of a photo from a Centuria Telegram post. In it, the NAA Chief is apparently handing Yuriy Gavrylyshyn a commemorative plaque.



Image: Photo posted to Facebook by the NAA Chief. Danylo Tikhomirov and Yuriy Gavrylyshyn appear to be on the right in the bottom row wearing red berets.

The notable position of Centuria's apparent leaders in the NAA is further supported by the fact that "Gavrylyshyn Yuriy Ivanovych (Гаврилишин Юрій Іванович), a cadet of the NAA" is listed as an [author](#) of an article published as part of a November 2020 scientific conference in Odessa that was supported by Ukraine's Ministry of Defense.

In addition to the visible role of its apparent leaders in the NAA, Centuria's claim to be a group composed of Ukraine's future military elite is corroborated by the fact that it apparently counts among its members individuals who have made it to prestigious Western military education institutions as cadets of the NAA.

Going West: One Apparent Centuria Member trained at the UK's Sandhurst for 11 Months, Another Was Welcomed at Germany's OSH

As mentioned earlier, the NAA spokesman told the author that the Academy's best cadets participated in international exchange programs with prestigious Western military education institutions. Two apparent members of Centuria— 2021 alumnus Kyrylo Dubrovskiyi (Ukrainian: *Кирило Дубровський*), also known under his call sign "Lyricist" (Ukrainian: *Лірик*), and 2020 alumnus Vladyslav Vintergoller (Ukrainian: *Владислав Вінтерголлер*)—accomplished just that.



Our sincere congratulations to the officer-cadet Kyrylo #Dubrovskiyi on successful graduation from the Initial Officers Training course at the Royal Academy #Sandhurst @RMASandhurst. Stronger together 🇺🇦 🇬🇧



10:14 AM · Dec 11, 2020 · TweetDeck

Dubrovskiyi attended an 11-month Army officer commissioning course at the United Kingdom's Royal Military Academy Sandhurst (RMAS), graduating in late 2020. The British Embassy Kyiv told the author that each year, two Ukrainian officer cadets attend Army officer commissioning courses at the RMAS.

Dubrovskiyi's graduation was celebrated by the [Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Ukraine](#) and in several media reports in Ukraine, [including a 12-minute video profile](#) by the NAA's Press Service.

Vintergoller's experience with Western military education institutions was significantly less grandiose in nature: in April 2019, while an NAA cadet, he took part in the 30th International Week' event held by Germany's Army Officers' Academy (Die Offizierschule des Heeres, OSH) in Dresden.

Image: Tweet about Kyrylo Dubrovskiyi by the Embassy of Ukraine to the United Kingdom.

Dubrovskiyi, who, by his own admission, graduated from the NAA in June 2021 and joined the Ukrainian Naval Infantry, did not respond to a request for comment about his experience with Centuria. By contrast, Vintergoller, a 2020 alumnus of the Academy, responded to a similar request, writing via Telegram that the group is "a brotherhood striving to change and reform" all aspects of the military of Ukraine and accepts "only individuals with unconventional thinking who are not ready

to bow down and silently follow orders.” Vintergoller also criticized the Armed Forces of Ukraine as “living by Soviet standards.” Soon after responding to the author, Vintergoller removed his response (Telegram allows users to delete sent messages for all parties) and changed the visibility of his Telegram account, but screenshots of his response were contemporaneously preserved.

Evidence discovered by the author links Dubrovskiy and Vintergoller to Centuria.

A video shared by Vintergoller on Instagram in June 2021 showed him doing pushups with a Centuria banner clearly visible in the background. Vintergoller, per a diploma he posted on Instagram, graduated from the NAA in 2020 with a specialization in Artillery Units Control. That year, he seemingly appeared in Centuria’s June 2020 [propaganda](#) post on Telegram that celebrated members of the group graduating from the NAA. The post featured a photo of a group of seven men (their faces blurred) in parade uniforms standing in front of a humvee. The photo—likely taken on the day of the [NAA’s 2020 graduation ceremony](#) at the International Peacekeeping and Security Center—has the words “Pride of the Centuria” superimposed over it. Vintergoller, who cuts a recognizable figure, with his tall, muscular frame and protruding ears, may be the individual on the far left in the photo. He shared the image on his Instagram in 2020 as part of a collection of stories entitled “Graduation.” The Telegram post said that “young officer members of the Centuria order” would soon arrive at their respective AFU units” and that “everyone willing to serve with a clear idea (sic!) will have the opportunity to serve under the command of the Centuria order of the Armed Forces of Ukraine.”

Image: Screenshot from an Instagram story posted by Vladyslav Vintergoller in 2021. Note the Centuria banner on the wall.



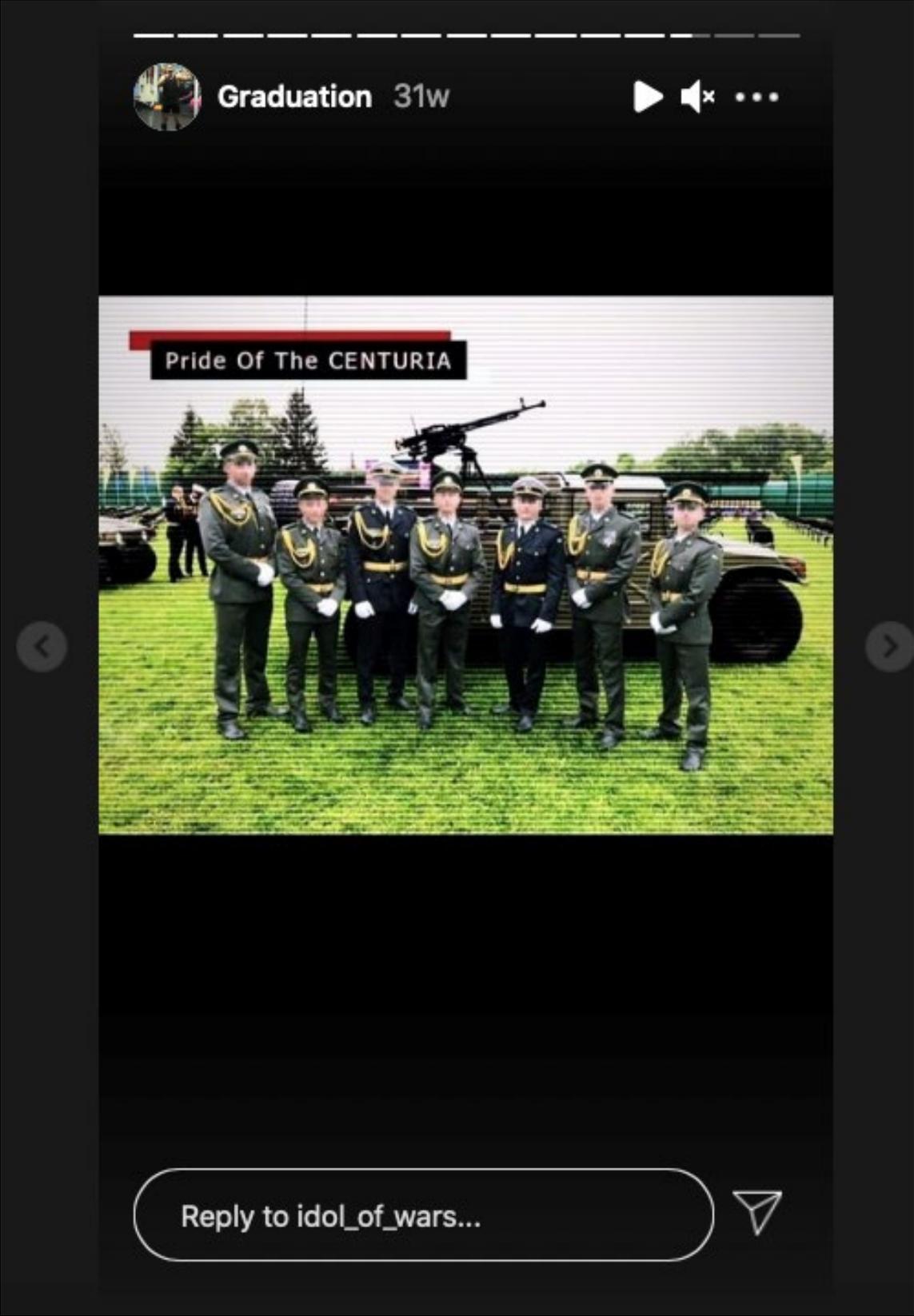


Image: Screenshot from an Instagram story posted by Vladyslav Vintergoller in 2020.

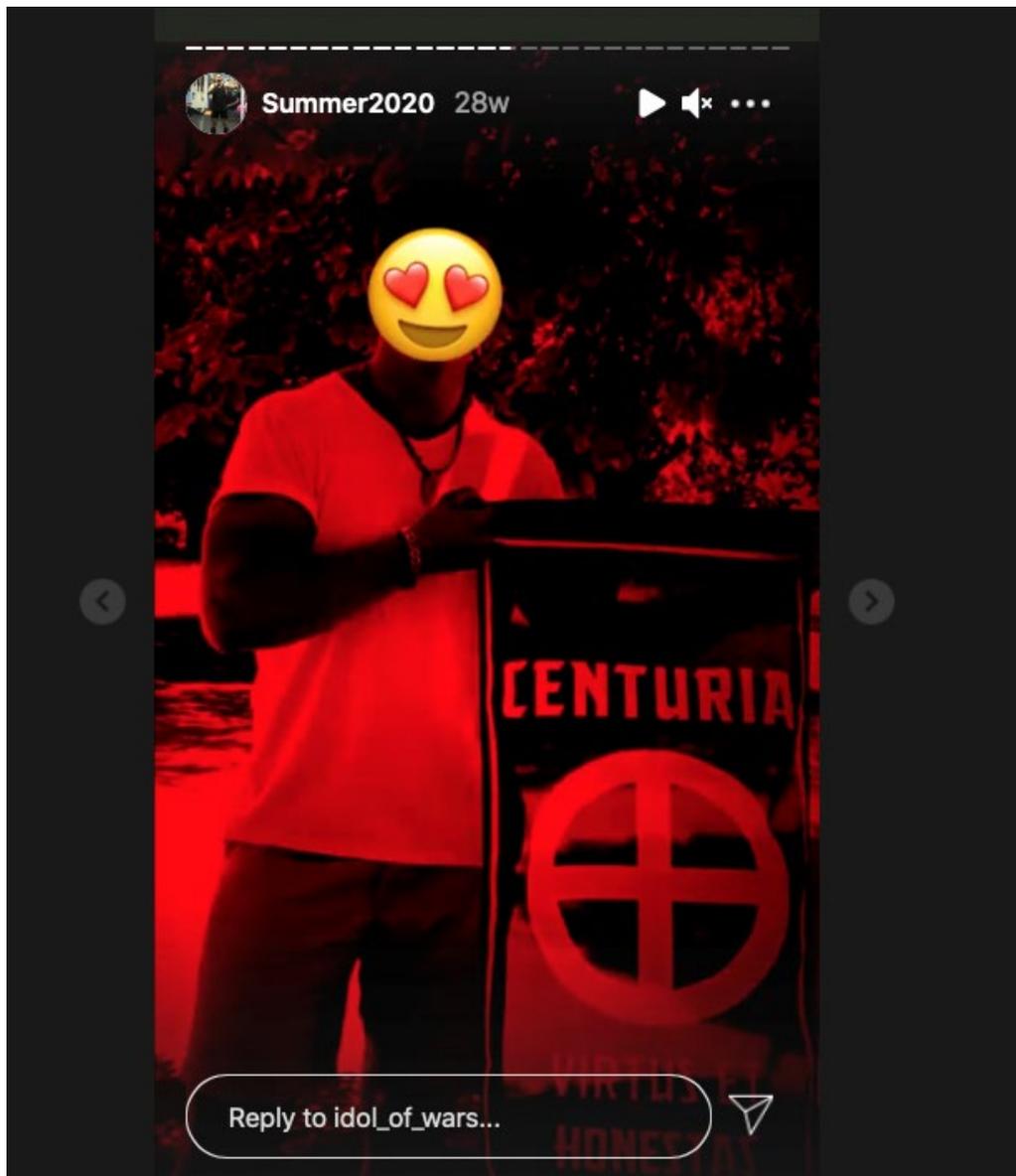


Image: Screenshot from an Instagram story posted by Vladyslav Vintergoller in 2020.

Vintergoller's Instagram stories also contained a photo of a man, likely Vintergoller himself, holding a Centuria banner. The face of the man in the photo was obscured by an emoji.

On his social media, Vintergoller shared photos showing him at the event held at Germany's Army Officers' Academy ([Die Offizierschule des Heeres, OSH](#)) in Dresden in April 2019. "Thank you to all the people who participated in the '30th International week'. You gave me a lot of emotions, feelings, new acquaintances, practices," he [wrote](#) on Instagram in English. Vintergoller [can be seen](#) next to another NAA cadet in an apparent official group photo of the participants in the 30th International Week event. Reached for comment about Vintergoller's participation in the 2019 OSH event, the German Ministry of Defense responded that it "was not in a position to provide details of bilateral military cooperation with any other State, including Ukraine."



Image: Screenshot of an April 2019 Instagram post by Vladyslav Vintergoller. Vintergoller is on the left in the bottom row.



Image: Screenshot of an Instagram post by another apparent participant in the 30th International Week event held by Germany's Army Officers' Academy. Vintergoller is on the right in the bottom row.

Dubrovskiy's role in Centuria appears significant, goes back to at least 2018, and continued during the period in which he trained at the UK's prestigious RMAS.

Dubrovskiy, the evidence suggests, was part of the Centuria event with NAA cadets that apparently took place in July 2018 and included a recitation of the "Prayer of the Ukrainian Nationalist" with NAA cadets. Under his call sign "Lyricist," Dubrovskiy is mentioned as a "member of the Centuria order" in the Telegram post about that event. He also appears to be recognizable in the video of the recitation.

In the summer of 2019, Dubrovskiy marched with Centuria at the Lviv rally organized by the far-right parties. Microsoft Azure face verification concludes with a high confidence score (0.72) that Dubrovskiy is the individual seen in a black T-shirt wearing a Centuria patch next to other members of the group at the rally. Not unlike other apparent members of the group, Dubrovskiy used photos from the event in his online presence, including using a photo of a man (his back turned to the camera) with a Centuria patch taken at the rally as his WhatsApp profile picture.



Image: A cropped still from the YouTube video of the 2019 far-right march in Lviv. Kyrylo Dubrovskiy is on the left.

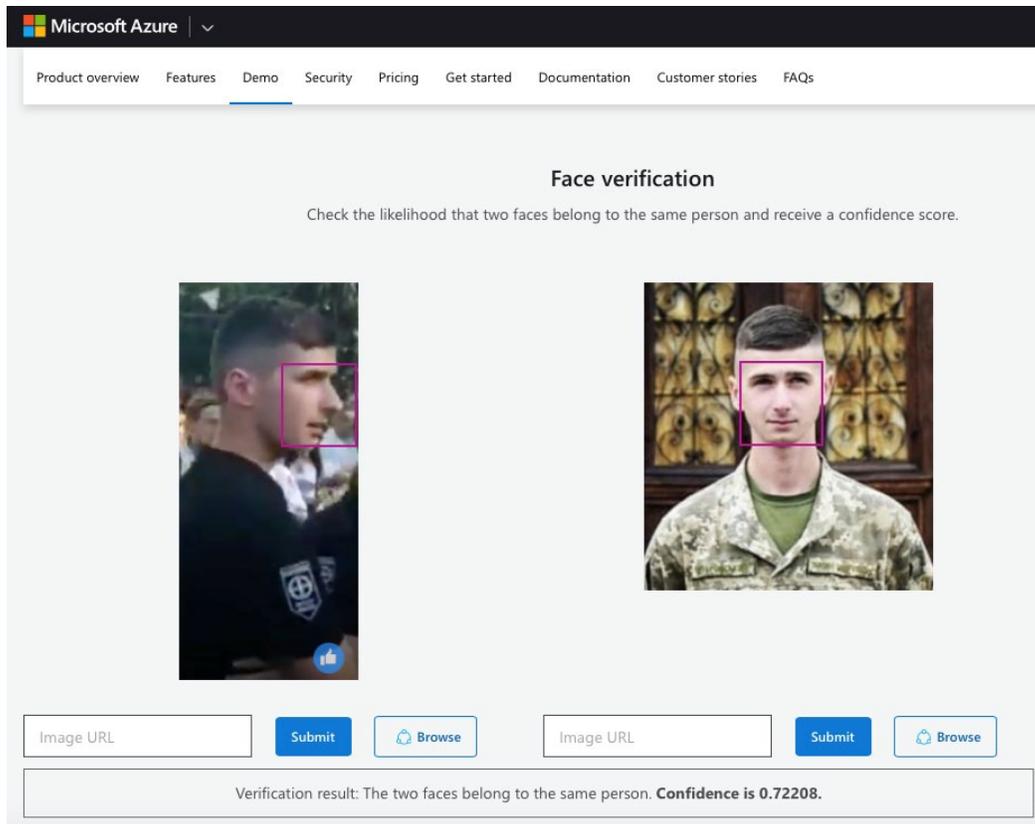


Image: Screenshot of the results of Face Verification by Microsoft Azure. On the left is a still from the rally, on the right is a photo taken from Dubrovskiy's Facebook. "The two faces belong to the same person. Confidence is 0.72208."

Dubrovskiy's online presence during his time with the RMAS further ties him to Centuria. A prolific blogger with several pages on [Instagram](#) (private @kd_lirik and public @lirik_tac, the latter of which has more than 4,600 followers), [YouTube](#), and [Telegram](#), Dubrovskiy appears to have served as the group's propagandist even during the period when he was being trained by the UK military.

On May 31, 2020, Centuria [posted](#) a rare promotional video to Telegram. "Recently, due to external factors, the Centuria order has not been reporting on its activities. However, we decided to film a short video about us and show you moments of the lives of Centurions," read the text accompanying the video. The reel featured video shots of Centuria members marching in Lviv, an event inside the NAA, shots of men firing machine guns, RPGs, artillery being fired, etc. While the video is remarkable for showing several members of Centuria, including the aforementioned Danylo Tikhomirov, it also features a narration by a young man whose voice strongly resembles that of Dubrovskiy. "Look for us in every Ukrainian military unit. Our officers are raising the new army of Ukraine [...] We are the Centuria. We are everywhere [...] defend your territories, your traditions till the last drop of blood," the voice intoned.

Dubrovskiy showed very keen interest in Centuria matters while with the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst. When in early August 2020 the Azov movement's aforementioned public rollout of a group bearing the same name led the "military order" to distance itself therefrom both online and in comments to the media, Dubrovskiy made a lengthy Instagram [post](#) that repeated Centuria's statements on the differences between the two groups of the same name. That same day, he [posted](#)

an interview with Ihor “Cherkas” Mykhailenko, the leader of the Azov group of the same name, describing the interview as an exclusive he conducted himself. The Azov movement’s “Centuria,” formerly known as the National Militia, confirmed to the author that Dubrovskiy interviewed Mykhailenko but insisted that Mykhailenko was not their leader “at the current time.” Dubrovskiy’s post quoted Mykhailenko’s comments about the “military order Centuria”: “Personally I have a lot of respect for the guys in the Armed Forces who have the same name. They are the future of the Ukrainian Army,” the Azov leader told Dubrovskiy. It should be noted that Azov’s Mykhailenko promoted the self-described “military order Centuria” in 2019. In August of that year, [he wrote](#) about the group on his Telegram channel, sharing a link to its Telegram: “Follow the example of the best representatives of the nation [...] Join.”



Image: Screenshot of a now-deleted Instagram post by Dubrovskiy with a text written on behalf of Centuria. On the left is the emblem of the group that is part of the Azov movement. On the right is the Centuria coat of arms.

Contemporaneously with Dubrovskiy’s training at the RMAS, Centuria in April 2020 [published](#) an [interview with an unnamed “cadet”](#) of Her Majesty’s Armed forces” on Telegram. The anonymous interviewee, although introduced to readers as “an officer of the Armed Forces of Great Britain,” was asked about the differences in the way “a cadet’s day” was organized in the UK compared to Ukraine, etc. In his response, the interviewee described his experience at an unnamed military education institution in the UK, including his daily schedule, which featured an early 5:50 AM rise, followed by “cleaning” on the premises, breakfast, “classes,” etc. “We have a set schedule covering the whole year,” he stated. Per the interviewee, the most drastic difference between his experiences in the UK and Ukraine was that “field exercises” in the British Armed Forces were “really severe and exhausting.” The short text concluded with the interviewee’s remarks that UK officer training, in his experience,

put less emphasis on theory than training in Ukraine. “In that respect, I like the way the AFU officers are trained more,” the interviewee told Centuria, adding that he was happy that the interviewers had reached out. It stands to reason that the unnamed interviewee was Dubrovskiyi.

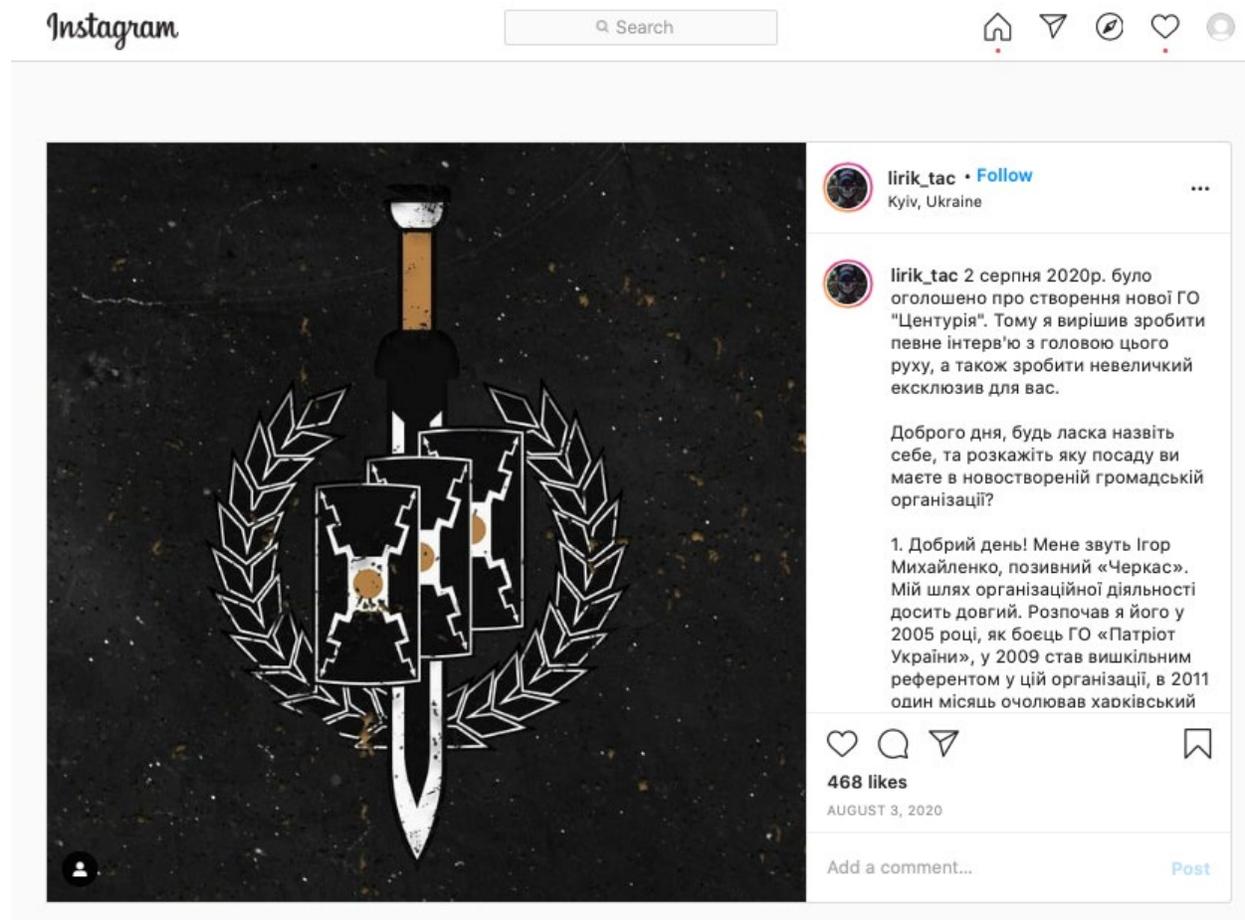


Image: Screenshot of a now-deleted Instagram post by Dubrovskiyi containing an exclusive interview with the leader of Azov’s street wing. Formerly known as the National Militia, in August 2020 that organization changed its name to “Centuria.” The emblem is used by the group that is part of the Azov movement.

The impression that Dubrovskiyi and Centuria leveraged his status as a Sandhurst cadet to promote the group is reinforced by the fact that the [“About” section](#) of Dubrovskiyi’s YouTube channel features the Centuria slogan (“Virtus et Honestas”) alongside his contemporaneous self-description as an RMAS cadet. “I’m a cadet of the Royal Academy of Great Britain in a year-long training [...] Virtus et honestas,” Dubrovskiyi wrote. He posted several videos on the channel detailing his RMAS experiences, including an [11-minute video tour](#) of his RMAS dorm. Notably, Dubrovskiyi’s YouTube also [features a video](#) homage to the Azov Regiment apparently produced by Dubrovskiyi himself. On his public Instagram page, @lirik_tac, Dubrovskiyi wrote in 2021 that during his time in the RMAS, he considered dropping out (it is unclear whether he meant from the RMAS or the NAA) to join the Azov Regiment.

It is also noteworthy that during his time at the NAA, Dubrovskiyi enjoyed access to foreign cadets who visited the Academy. He was involved in the Academy’s international cooperation events and on

several occasions escorted foreign delegations that visited the Academy. In March 2019 he [accompanied](#) a group of U.S. Air Force Academy cadets [who were visiting](#) the Academy proper and the International Peacekeeping and Security Center it oversees. In early 2021 Dubrovskyi chaperoned two French [military cadets](#) from France's Saint-Cyr (Special Military School of Saint-Cyr) who spent two weeks at the NAA.

Group Doctrine Emphasizes International Solidarity to Defend “European Identity” from Moscow, Brussels; Apparent Members Spout Racism, Perform Nazi Salutes

Active online since early 2018, Centuria has produced a vast body of statements and texts expounding on its long-term goal of influencing Ukrainian society as a whole, discussing its ideology, and criticizing the institutions Centuria seeks to influence.

“Centuria is shaping a first-of-its-kind military elite whose goal is to attain the highest ranks inside the Armed Forces [of Ukraine] in order to become an authoritative core able to hold significant influence within the structure of the Armed Forces,” the group stated in a [December 2020 Telegram post](#). Influence within the military, per the group, was only the first stage, with the second and final stage culminating in entering “Ukraine’s political elite” in order to “carry out societal changes.” In the same post, the group indicated it was fully conscious of the gargantuan nature of the task: “They [the two stages] are extremely long, hard, but productive.”

Determined to achieve influence within Ukraine’s military, Centuria consistently painted the former as bogged down by its Soviet-era mentality while casting itself as the cure for the military’s alleged ills. For example, in a May 2021 Telegram [post](#) reflecting on Centuria’s third anniversary, the group described its activities as “defending the Ukrainian state and fighting Sovietdom” (Ukrainian: *совденія*). The post boasted about Centuria officers’ success at establishing international ties “with foreign colleagues from such countries as France, the United Kingdom, Canada, the US, Germany, and Poland;” rooting out alcoholism and addiction in their AFU units; and instilling high standards of professionalism and patriotism in the troops. In an April 2020 [text](#) entitled “Unit Readiness—Victory in Combat,” the group criticized the Command of the Armed Forces of Ukraine for installing in command posts those who “would be loyal in exchange for fully material goods and would follow any order.” The group claimed that the officers selected for promotion by the Ukrainian military command were “alcoholics” and “out- of- touch Soviet officers.” The military command’s “manpower policies,” Centuria alleged, resulted in “conflicts and the spread of corruption.” Nestled for years inside the NAA, the group pulled no punches in its attacks on the military education system. In an April 2020 [text](#) entitled “Cadet of the New Format,” Centuria blamed the supposed uncouthness of officer cadets on the “bad, poorly structured work of the officer corps, commanders, and educators.”

In contrast to the supposed ineptitude of the AFU leadership, Centuria extolled its own supposed virtues and alleged efforts. “Motivated cadets, soldiers, sergeants and officers [...] we are united by the desire to improve our troops and make them into reliable support for the state and every Ukrainian,” stated a November 2020 [text](#) published by Centuria entitled “The New Warrior.” The same text claimed that in those units where Centuria members served, they were actively involved in educating soldiers by sharing the experience they had gained “on the frontlines and during international exercises,” as well as holding lectures. “The Order not only works in the rear [of the Armed Forces], but also actively fights on the frontlines,” the text added.

Online, Centuria often posted motivational quotes that ran the gamut from [Clausewitz](#) to [Patton](#) to [Sun Tzu](#). In this mix of reformist rhetoric and military trivia, Centuria embedded praise for Nazi figures and introduced followers to its own unmistakably far-right ideology.

CENTURIA

June 16



15 червня 1906 року в старовинному місті, овіяному славою Хрестових Походів, народився Лицар Бургундії Леон Марі Ігнас Дегрель — справжній Європеець, яскравий політичний діяч і письменник, відважний воїн і талановитий командир (на кінець війни - 22 бойові нагороди), останній фольксфюрер і лідер бельгійського правого руху Рекс.

Все його життя пройшло в безкомпромісній боротьбі за велич Європейської цивілізації, яка на думку Дегреля повинна була нарешті знайти єднання в рамках відродженої Європейської Імперії.

#CENTURIA_date #CENTURIA_european_heroes

👁️ 401 Γιάνν..., edited 3:05 PM

Among the Nazi figures venerated by the group are Belgian Nazi collaborator and SS officer Léon Degrelle, described by Centuria as a “true European,” Finnish [SS officer Brunolf Palmgren](#), and a slew of figures associated with the ethnic Ukrainian 14th Waffen Grenadier Division of the SS. In a dedicated text published in April 2020, Centuria [praised](#) that Nazi unit as “the symbol the enemies of Ukraine fear” and urged followers to defend it from attacks. “As long as we have examples and images to look up to, we are invincible,” the group proclaimed. Centuria’s reverence for SS Galicia is not unlike the stance of even some of the moderate nationalist circles in Ukraine. But when [a march](#) was held by the far right in downtown Kyiv in April 2021 to honor the Nazi military unit, the President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy [condemned it](#) via his official site.

Image: Screenshot of a Centuria Telegram post about Belgian Nazi collaborator and SS officer Léon Degrelle.

The most consistent and succinct representation of Centuria’s ideology comes in [its key text](#), “The Manifesto of the Centuria Movement.” First published in late 2019, the text crowned the group’s Telegram channel until May 2021, when it suddenly disappeared against the backdrop of inquiries regarding Centuria to numerous parties. Although the Telegram post linking to the Manifesto was removed, the text itself is [still available](#), and the author [archived a copy](#). As of July 2021, Centuria has not taken any steps to disavow statements made in its Manifesto or any other documents, posts, etc., made since 2018.

The Manifesto is remarkable for emphatically defining Centuria as an organization opposed to liberalism, as well as equally to Moscow and Brussels, and paints a picture of a group whose ambitions and self-identification extend far beyond the borders of Ukraine.

In a lengthy self-description, the Manifesto defines the group as a “community of European traditionalists that sets as its goal the unification and consolidation of nationally oriented officers, volunteer fighters, and volunteers who realize the catastrophic state in (sic!) Europe, as well as in Ukraine, and believe the latter to be an inalienable part of the all-of-Europe space. In the renaissance of Ukraine, an heir to the Kyivan Rus, is a chance to defend the heroic past of Europe and to conquer an even better future for our successors.”

The document then proceeds to define its “crucial ideological concept,” the “Europe of Nations—a single civilizational space whose sacred goal lies in defense of the identity of the European peoples from all threats internal and external.”

“Whereas earlier our peoples were separated and for thousands of years either formed unions or waged religious wars, wars of conquest or liberation against one another, today we are all united by the single need to save Europe, the sacred land of our ancestors, from everything that threatens its existence,” the Manifesto states.



Image: Screenshot of a Centuria Telegram post dedicated to SS Galicia.



Image: An image included in Centuria's Manifesto.

The document offers a list of 15 “key goals,” six of which are focused on the military of Ukraine. These include the arcane goal of “rebirth of the spirit of the European military aristocracy in the military environment” as well as more self-explanatory aims such as exchange of experience between the AFU and various volunteer fighter units, improvements to military education and training, etc. Two further goals are political and aligned with policies advocated by Ukrainian far-right parties: new gun laws and territorial defense reforms.

A total of five goals in the Manifesto are explicitly related to the group’s international ambitions or self-identification as a European group. For example, as its 12th goal Centuria lists “Strengthening of solidarity between European peoples, defense of common interests, cultural and ethnic identity both from Brussels’ politicians and bureaucrats and from the Kremlin’s Eurasianists and neo-Bolsheviks.” Elsewhere in the Manifesto, Centuria aims at “unifying like-minded people around the ideas of pan-European and Ukrainian nationalism and traditionalism” (9): “broad agitation and propaganda of the principles of all-European and national solidarity among officers, rank-and-file fighters, and volunteers” (10); and “revitalization of a heroic understanding of the life purpose of a European and his special mission in the world” (13).

“Centuria proclaims Tradition as a respected virtue. We back equal rights for all religious denominations that are traditional for European peoples—provided that they do not run counter to our ideology,” reads the 14th goal.

The Manifesto is capped off by the statement that “based on the ideological and physical hardening of the movement’s members,” Centuria has pitted its ideals of “order, development, and discipline” against “a society of destruction, consumption, equality, degeneration, and mixing.”

An earlier document produced by Centuria, a [text](#) entitled “The New Kingdom of Asturias,” explicitly put the group’s activities in Ukraine in the context of the reconquest of Europe by nationalist forces.

“It is our view that a strong and national Ukraine is destined to become the new Kingdom of Asturias of the European Reconquista—the coming struggle of the European peoples for their heritage and freedom, the end goal of which, we believe, is the consolidation of the European right forces and the imposition of the disciplining ideological basis of national-traditionalism for all the peoples of Europe,” the text states.

This reference to Reconquista by Centuria echoes the white supremacist geopolitical initiative of the same name within Ukraine’s internationally active Azov movement. As detailed by the author in a February 2019 Bellingcat [article](#), Reconquista, according to statements by Azov figures, is a long-term strategy meant to bring together nations of European origin under the banner of reclaiming land and culture.

It is these stated goals and ideology that should inform our understanding of Centuria activities within the Armed Forces of Ukraine and the group’s access to members of the Western military and military education institutions.

Centuria did not merely claim an interest in “consolidation of the European right forces.” From its earliest days, the group took steps to educate its followers on the most extreme elements of the European far right. In April 2018 the group [published](#) an interview, supposedly an exclusive one, with “a Russian speaking representative of the Nordic Resistance Movement” on its VK page. The interview predated Centuria’s self-admitted launch date of May 2018 and featured a disclaimer that the group did not necessarily share the views of the Nordic Resistance Movement (NRM). The NRM, a pan-Nordic neo-Nazi organization, was [banned](#) in Finland by Supreme Court decision in late 2020.

In yet another attention worthy-text, Centuria stated its willingness to be involved in Ukrainian politics. In late July 2019, mere weeks after its members marched with the far right in Lviv and days after the parliamentary election in Ukraine, [the group called on](#) the far right—consensus losers of the election, with a little over two percent of the vote—to form a single party and improve their image. Members of Centuria, the statement read, were ready to “facilitate qualitative change on the Right scene and participate in the formation of a new and unified national elite that is able to fight enemies foreign and domestic.”

While many statements made by the group stand in stark contrast to its ability to immediately deliver on them, they are important because they outline the scope of the far-reaching ambitions it set out to pursue early on.



Image: VK photo showing apparent Centuria members, presumably in early 2018, before the group's self-described launch in the May of that year. From left: Mykhailo Alfanov, Nazar Livenets, Serhiy Blinov, Oleksandr Komarov, and Danylo Tikhomirov. Komarov returned the author's request to comment on his relationship with the group. He said that he had been a member of Centuria "in the past" and described it as a group of "patriotic young officers willing to change the Armed Forces of Ukraine." Asked why he was no longer a member, he replied that he is not currently serving in the military and lives outside Ukraine.

In yet more evidence of Centuria's far-right character, some of its apparent key members could be seen making Nazi salutes [in an early 2018 photo](#) ostensibly taken inside the NAA barracks. The author established the identities of all individuals in the photo. Danylo Tikhomirov, Serhiy Blinov, and likely Nazar Livenets appeared in photos included in Facebook posts made by the Azov-linked *Національна оборона* (English: National Defense) magazine throughout 2018 about the NAA and Centuria activities within the Academy. Tikhomirov and Mykhailo Alfonov marched with Centuria in Lviv in 2019.

The online presences of some individuals affiliated with Centuria point to an affinity for extreme right-wing ideology. For example, some Kyrylo Dubrovskiy's social media posts suggest an interest in Nazism and the most extreme elements of the Ukrainian far right. Dubrovskiy's very profile picture on his more-than-4,600-follower-strong public Instagram, @lirik_tac, is a photo of a masked man, apparently Dubrovskiy himself, donning a baseball cap that prominently displays the logo of Ukrainian [neo-Nazi-owned clothing brand Sva Stone](#).



Image: Kyrylo Dubrovskiy uses this photo as his Instagram profile picture. Sva Stone is a clothing brand catering to the far right.

In February 2021, via his @lirik_tac Instagram page, Dubrovskiy encouraged his thousands of followers to also follow the apparent leader of the unabashedly neo-Nazi and Azov-linked [Nord Storm group](#), describing him as “serious people.” “You have to follow the Latvian [the Nord Storm figure’s call sign] 100%,” Dubrovskiy wrote. In early 2021, he also shared a video of several men wearing military fatigues dancing next to a white supremacist [Sonnenrad](#) banner. A text superimposed over the video read “dream lifestyle.”



Image left: Screenshot of an Instagram story by Kyrylo Dubrovskiy in which he called on his followers to follow a leader of the neo-Nazi Nord Storm group.

Image right: Screenshot from an Instagram story posted by Kyrylo Dubrovskiy. Note the Sonnenrad banner on the wall.

In May 2019 Dubrovskiy posted a quote in the Russian language widely attributed online to Hitler to his now-private @kd_lirik Instagram profile: “For achieving a great aim no sacrifice will seem too great” (Russian: *Перед лицом великой цели никакие жертвы не покажутся слишком большими*). The short quote accompanied a photo of Dubrovskiy in a T-shirt featuring the Sonnenrad symbol that was produced by Stay Brave, yet another Ukrainian brand that caters to the far right. The quote Dubrovskiy used is a bastardization of the original phrase from *Mein Kampf*, which reads, in English translation, “for achieving this aim no sacrifice must be too great.” The original is part of a longer

passage in which Hitler reflected on the beginnings of the Nazi party and its embrace of the use of “physical power.”

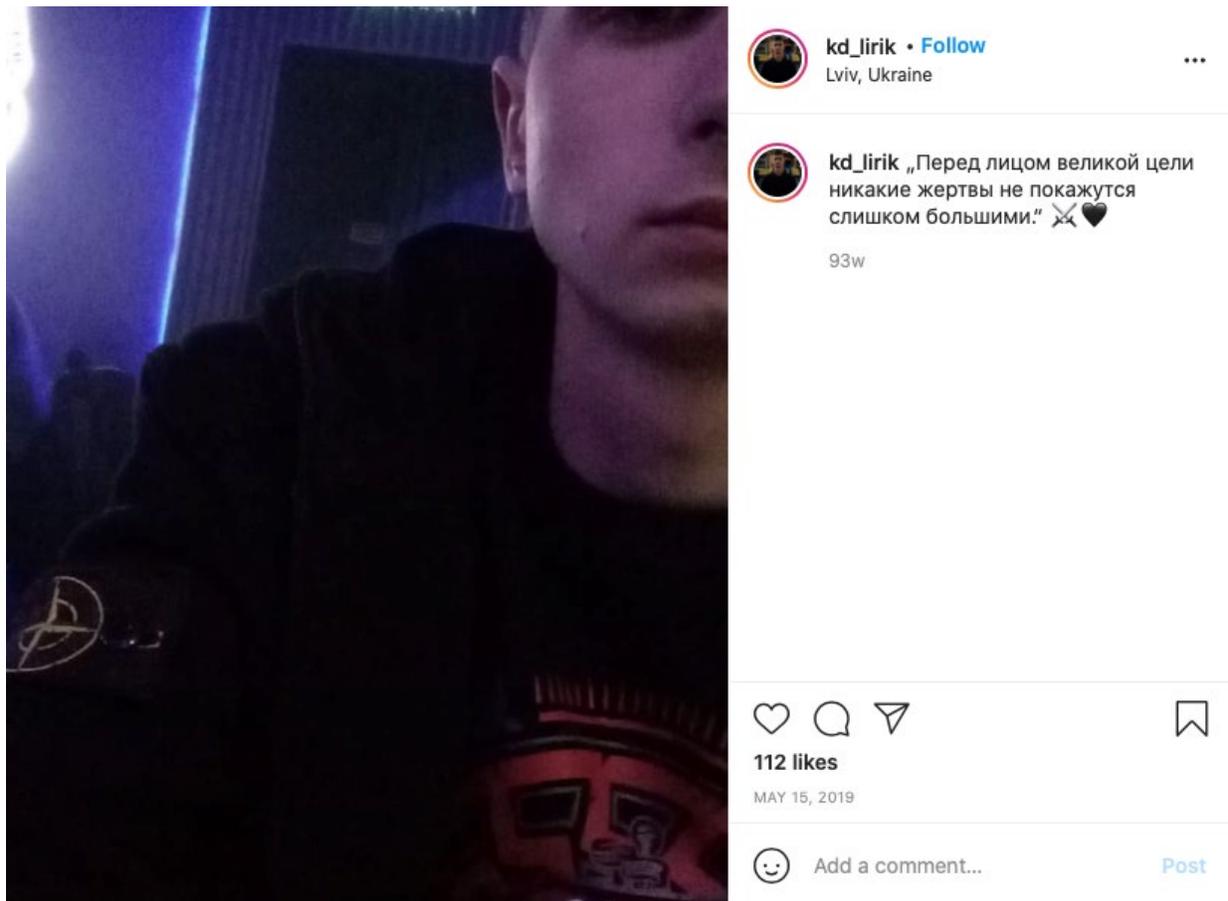


Image: Screenshot of a photo from Kyrylo Dubrovskiy's now-private Instagram. Dubrovskiy is wearing a T-shirt featuring the Sonnenrad symbol. The quote in the post is a bastardization of a phrase from “Mein Kampf”: “for achieving this aim no sacrifice must be too great.”

In contrast to Dubrovskiy, who was quite circumspect, apparent key Centuria figure Tikhomirov left a wealth of apparently extremist commentary online under his moniker “Dmytro Klinyuk.” Many of his posts are clearly written as ideological statements. For example, in a series of VK posts made in 2016, Tikhomirov apparently wrote that Jews were “[the destruction of humanity](#)”, and shared a post saying that Jews had attempted to “[exclude Ukraine from world history and the map of the world.](#)” That same year, Tikhomirov [wrote](#) that democracy had left Ukraine “robbed and exhausted” and needed to be “removed.” Notably, a year later, in 2017, Tikhomirov [penned](#) a post that reads like a blueprint for Centuria’s ideology and activities: “Revolution requires support and confidence. It will be enough for groups of nationalists to infiltrate governmental structures in a consolidated manner. During that [process] it will be possible to execute a forced change of the ruling system and to substitute it with the ranks of nationalists.” That same year, Tikhomirov also shared his thoughts on race, [writing](#) that with the disappearance of “[racial] purity, order will perish.”

Supporting these statements [is a December 2016 photo](#) of Tikhomirov in a group of about a dozen young people making Nazi salutes. The photo is included in a VK [post](#) by Tikhomirov that describes

the celebration of the anniversary of the neo-Nazi Patriot of Ukraine organization, a predecessor of the Azov Movement.



Image: Photo of Danylo Tikhomirov (center, wearing a tie) in a group of about a dozen young people making Nazi salutes that was posted to his VK in 2016.

Tikhomirov's statements and Centuria's ideology alike may have been informed to some extent by Tikhomirov's apparent affiliation with the little-researched Vandeia Alba (Russian: Белая Вандея) group inspired by French monarchism (Vendée monarchists) and supposedly led by another individual apparently now involved with Centuria, Yannis Khrimlis. Vandeia Alba propaganda available online features the "Virtus et Honestas" slogan currently used by Centuria and espouses similar ideological goals.

"It is in the unification of like-minded people in autonomous groups throughout Europe that we see the only path to prepare the European society to the new stage of civilizational struggle that has again become unavoidable in our dark age [...] Vandeia, an order of fighters and believers, must fulfill itself as an organism of absolute political purity, worthy of being the protector of the legacy of our great European ancestors," reads [a piece of Vandeia Alba propaganda](#) shared by Tikhomirov on his VK in February 2017. The VK post featured a photo of a group of masked armed men holding the Vandeia Alba banner.

Under his moniker “Carl Crazz,” Yannis Khrimlis, likely appeared in 2016 on a [podcast](#) linked with the Azov movement to talk about Vandeia Alba. Khrimlis might be the author of certain Centuria Telegram posts over the years and has left his own trail of statements online. He is also likely the black-clad figure in a May 2018 [photo](#) that shows Centuria’s Tikhomirov, Yuriy Gavrylyshyn, and presumably Khrimlis addressing a group of seven uniformed individuals, some of whom also appeared in other pictures related to Centuria. The supposed Khrimlis, as well as Tikhomirov and Gavrylyshyn, wear Centuria’ patches in the group photo. Khrimils did not return a request for comment sent to the Telegram channel associated with his Centuria activities.



Image: Presumably Yannis Khrimlis (on the left), Yuriy Gavrylyshyn (second on the left), and Danylo Tikhomirov (third on the left) with other apparent members of Centuria. The photo was posted to Khrimlis’ VK in 2018.

Several individuals with strong links to Centuria have posted content suggesting an affinity for white supremacy. For example, in November 2020, Vitaliy Rosolovskiy, an NAA cadet apparently close to Centuria, [posted a photo of himself with two American servicemen \(both black men\)](#) who were members of the Task Force Illini (which led the Joint Multinational Training Group—Ukraine at the time) to Instagram. The photo was likely taken in the International Peacekeeping and Security Center where the NAA cadets routinely train. Rosolovskiy accompanied the photo with a comment that contained the white supremacist “14/88” [numerical symbols](#). He also geotagged the post to “Zimbabwe.” When a commenter under the post asked—in a seeming allusion to the Americans’ skin color—if the American servicemen were “eggplants,” Rosolovskiy responded in the affirmative. In 2020 Rosolovskiy posted a photo apparently showing him wearing a T-shirt emblazoned with the (blurred but recognizable) Centuria coat of arms, which features an eagle atop a fascio, and another photo that seems to show him making a Nazi salute. So far in 2021, Rosolovskiy has shared on his Instagram Centuria propaganda, photos alluding to the neo-Nazi “14/88” numerical symbols, a photo of a bust of Hitler, and a photo of white children sitting on the backs of two black children as though riding them, among other things.

Reached for comment about his ties to Centuria, Rosolovskiy shared details of a Telegram account that apparently belongs to Gavrylyshyn, with the words “you can pose all your questions to [telegram handle].” The account features profile pictures used by Gavrylyshyn on Instagram. Rosolovskiy then deleted his Telegram channel.



Image: Screenshot of an Instagram post by Vitaliy Rosolovskiy showing him with members of the Task Force Illini (which led the Joint Multinational Training Group—Ukraine at the time). The photo was taken in the NAA’s International Peacekeeping and Security Center. Note the white supremacist 14/88 numerical symbols included by Rosolovskiy in the post.



10vitalik44



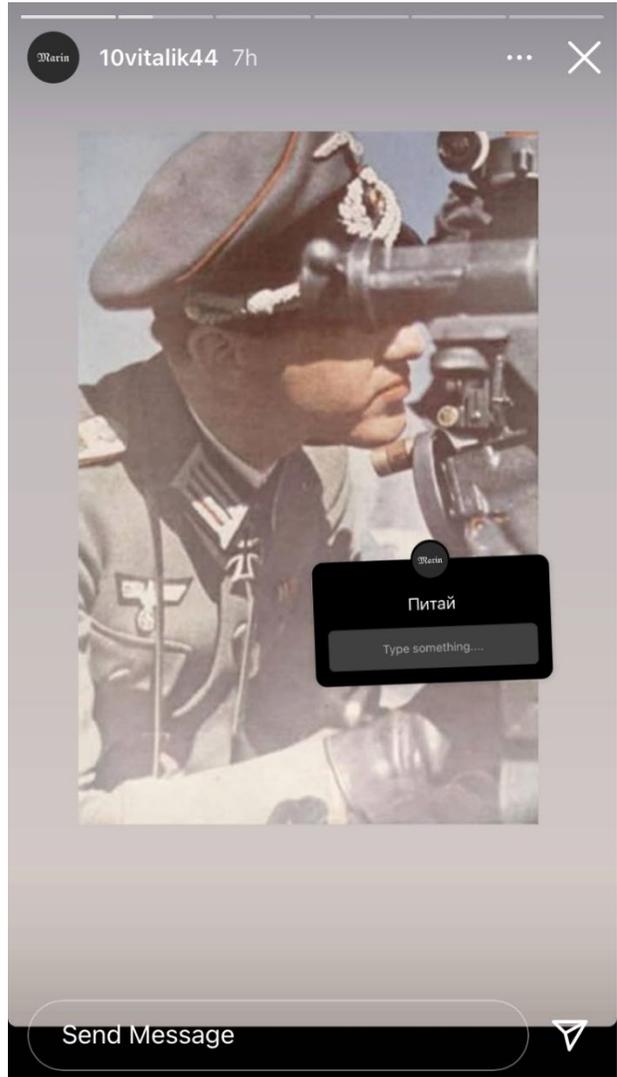
177 likes

10vitalik44 А воооон там колись був динозавр



Image top: Screenshot of an Instagram post by Vitaliy Rosolovskiy. "There once was a dinosaur over there," reads the text of the post.

Image below: Screenshot of an Instagram story posted by Vitaliy Rosolovskiy.



Spreading the Message with Far-Right Allies that Draw International Condemnation, Media Scrutiny

The available information about Centuria's activities paints a picture of ties to, and promotion by, Ukrainian far-right groups. The group's relationship with the Azov movement is particularly close.

As mentioned earlier, speaking to *KP.ua* in August 2020, a member of Centuria who introduced himself as "Yuriy" (likely Centuria's leader, Yuriy Gavrylyshyn) said that the group's founders had originally intended to return to the Azov Regiment, the military wing of the Azov movement, upon graduation from the NAA, but later decided "to serve in the regular Ukrainian armed forces, propagandize our national values and popularize officer aristocracy." References to Azov and veneration of the Regiment are plentiful in Centuria's online presence. Notably, in [May 2019](#) and [May 2020](#) Telegram posts dedicated to the group's anniversary, Centuria mentioned its own founding alongside that of Azov, describing the Azov Regiment as "legendary" and "one of the best military units of the Ukrainian military."

According to Centuria, the group's first event allegedly held inside the NAA proper, which took place in September 2018, was dedicated to the Azov movement. Per Centuria, during this event, entitled "Idea of the Nation" (Azov's own term for the Wolfsangel symbol it uses heavily), it introduced NAA cadets to the history of the Azov movement; its predecessor, the neo-Nazi Patriot of Ukraine organization; and the Azov Regiment. Cadets could also talk to Centuria members who had served in the Azov Regiment, according to the group. Centuria posted several images from the alleged event that show under a dozen uniformed men in a classroom looking at the Centuria logo beamed on the wall. The author could not confirm that the photos were taken inside the NAA.

Centuria members apparently also visited the Azov Regiment of the National Guard of Ukraine to give lectures. According to August 2019 [Facebook](#) and [Telegram](#) posts by the Special Detachment "East" (Ukrainian: *Спеціальний підрозділ МВС "Схід"*), a unit of Ukraine's Ministry of Internal Affairs closely linked to the Azov movement, members of Centuria held a lecture for fighters of the Azov Regiment and the Special Detachment "East" on the former's base. The post featured several photos of nearly 20 uniformed men in "Azov" and "East" T-shirts listening to a lecturer (face blurred out) inside a classroom. According to the post, the lecture, entitled "The Phenomenon of European Religious Culture," was important because it contributed to the "shaping of a new, ideologically hardened military generation." Just weeks later, in September, Centuria claimed on Facebook that its members had that month held yet another lecture—this time on the topic of "100 Years of Ukrainian Revolution: Causes and Consequences"—on the Azov Regiment's base. The post was accompanied with photos. The Azov Regiment did not return the author's request for comment. It is plausible that Yannis Khimlis represented "Centuria" at both alleged events.



Спецпідрозділ МВС "Схід"

Police station

Send Message

Спецпідрозділ МВС "Схід"

5 August 2019 · 🌟

Like Page

🌐 Нещодавно на військовій базі ОЗСП "АЗОВ", спільно з представниками руху Centuria була проведена лекція-бесіда на тему "Феномен європейської релігійної культури". На лекції, де були присутні бійці спецпідрозділу МВС "СХІД" та ОЗСП "АЗОВ", була розглянута історична ретроспектива героїчної релігійної спадщини наших предків та зв'язок дохристиянських релігійних уявлень з воїнським архетипом та його цінностями, що і у наші часи не втратили своєї актуальності.

🔥 Традиція - це не збереження попелу, а передача вогню, саме тому, проведення лекцій і обговорення всіх питань пов'язаних з фундаментальним культурним надбанням наших славних попередників є важливим аспектом формування нової, ідейно загартованої мілітарної генерації.

Image: Screenshot of a Facebook post by the Special Detachment "East," a unit of Ukraine's Ministry of Internal Affairs closely linked to the Azov movement.



Centuria

8 September 2019 · 🌐



ПАМ'ЯТАЙ ПРО ВЕЛИКІ ДНІ НАШИХ ВИЗВОЛЬНИХ ЗМАГАНЬ

Закінчилося літо, і після невеликого перепочинку, Орден CENTURIA знову взявся за проведення лекцій для українських добровольців і військовослужбовців.

6 вересня на військовій базі ОЗСП "АЗОВ", соратники CENTURIA провели ідеологічну лекцію на тему "100 років Української Революції: причини і висновки".

Метою лекції була спроба осмислити події пов'язані з боротьбою українського народу за свою державну незалежність в контексті епохи загальноєвропейської Великої Війни і революційних подій в Центральній і Східній Європі.

[#CENTURIA_action](#) [#CENTURIA_info](#)



Image: A screenshot of a now-deleted Facebook post by Centuria.

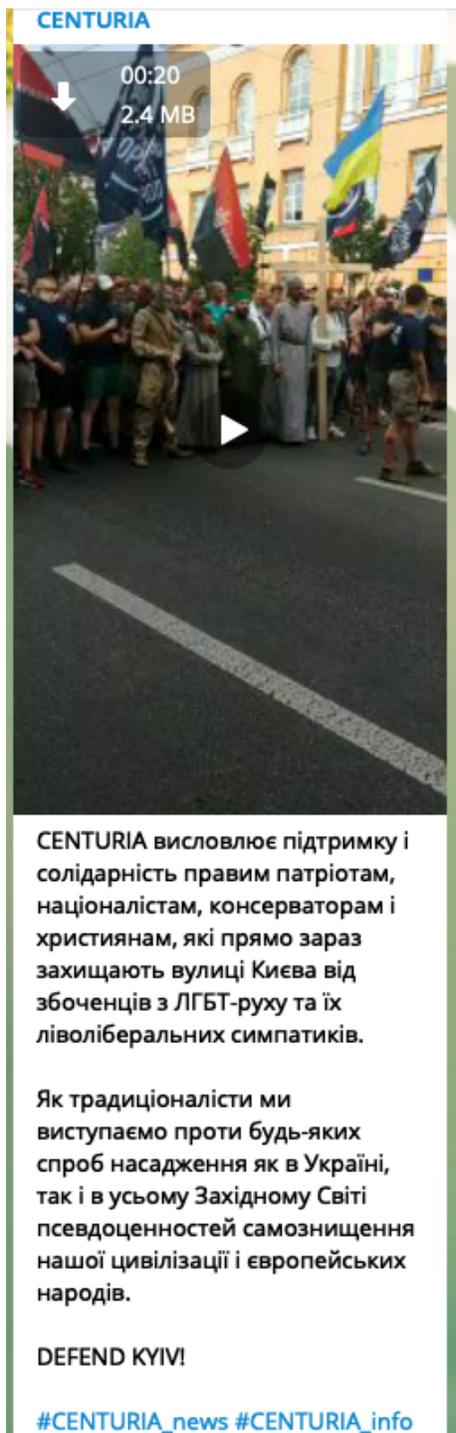
Notably, [according to Centuria](#), in September 2019 the group helped Plomin, a publishing house and reading club linked to the Azov movement, organize a presentation of the Ukrainian translation of *Le cœur rebelle*, a book by the French far-right historian Dominique Venner. Venner [shot himself in 2013](#) beside the altar of Notre Dame. The suicide, according to Venner’s letter, as cited by the BBC, was an act in “defence of the traditional family” and in the “fight against illegal immigration.” The presentation reportedly [took place](#) at Lviv Regional Universal Scientific Library, located in downtown Lviv. Prior to the event, Centuria’s claims to be a co-organizer [were shared](#) on Telegram by figures and groups closely linked to Plomin. Centuria’s Telegram posts about the event include a photo, apparently taken at the September 2019 presentation, that shows an individual (his face blurred out) wearing a Centuria patch standing next to Serhiy Zaikovskiy, a far-right organizer and editor for Plomin.

An officer of the Azov Regiment, important Azov movement figure and speaker Yuriy Mykhalchyshyn, could be seen with apparent members of Centuria in Lviv in June 2019 when he held an event in that city. Mykhalchyshyn—[described](#) by the Azov movement as “a leading lecturer for the National Corps”—was a member of Ukraine’s parliament (the Rada) representing the far-right Freedom Party between 2012 and 2014, and worked in Ukraine’s Security Service (the SBU) between 2014 and 2016. A [photo](#) shared by Mykhalchyshyn on his Facebook page shows him with eight apparent Centuria members, including Gavrylyshyn, who is pictured wearing a Centuria patch, and Danylo Tikhomirov. One of the individuals pictured with Mykhalchyshyn contemporaneously posted the photo on his Instagram page with the hashtag #центурия (Russian for Centuria). Mykhalchyshyn did not return the author’s request for comment.



Image: Photo posted by Azov figure Yuriy Mykhalchyshyn. The same photo was also posted on Instagram by an apparent Centuria member, Yevhen Romanchenko, seen on the far right of the photo, with the hashtag #центурия. From the left: Oleksandr Gryshkin (likely name), Mykhailo Alfonov, Oleksandr Zbozhnyi, Yuriy Gavrylyshyn, Yuriy Mykhalchyshyn, Dmytro Shuleshov, Vladyslav Chuguenko, Danylo Tikhomirov, and Yevhen Romanchenko.

As mentioned earlier, Centuria's activities within the NAA were acknowledged in 2018 by the Azov-linked *Національна оборона* (English: National Defense) magazine and the Azov Regiment proper online, while Ihor Mykhailenko, the leader of Azov's street wing, complimented the group in 2019 and 2020. Such mentions raised the group's profile.



Other Azov figures and groups linked to Azov also heaped praise on Centuria and shared its messages online. [In January 2019](#), for example, Eduard Yurchenko, an ideologue of the Azov movement, praised the group on Telegram, where he now has more than 1,100 subscribers. “You should know that this is our legendary future growing,” Yurchenko wrote of Centuria, emphasizing that the group was holding events within the NAA. That same year, Yurchenko [reshared Centuria's](#) Manifesto and other statements by the group. Galician Youth, a group that is linked to the Azov movement and operates in the Western part of Ukraine, similarly [shared Centuria](#) propaganda on Telegram in 2019. Centuria's statements were also [shared](#) by such Azov-linked Telegram channels as @sriblotroyandy (the anti-feminist Sliver of the Rose groupuscule has over 1,600 followers on Telegram) and @lichtwarts (the European Nihilism channel, with more than 1,800 followers, is run by important Azov figure Yevhen Vriadnyk).

While Azov's relationship with Centuria is marked by joint events (including the aforementioned political rally in Lviv), explicit endorsements, etc., several prominent Ukrainian far-right groups, including [Karpatska Sich](#) and [Tradition and Order](#), boosted the group online by sharing its statements or links to Centuria's Telegram. Karpatska Sich shared Centuria's messages in both 2019 and 2021, while Tradition and Order shared a link to Centuria's Telegram [in late 2019](#) in a post that featured a list of right-wing Telegram channels characterized as “the most interesting on the Internets (sic!).” Some of the Telegram channels promoted by Tradition and Order represented groups and figures close to it. The aforementioned post described Centuria as a “community of European traditionalists.” Notably, in the summer of 2019, Centuria came out in support of a rally held by Ukrainian far-right groups, including Karpatska Sich' and Tradition and Order, to counter the LGBTQ “Kyiv Pride” event. On Telegram, Centuria stated its support for “right patriots, nationalists, conservatives and Christians currently defending the streets of Kyiv from perverts from the LGBT movement and their left-liberal sympathizers.”

Image: Screenshot of a 2019 Centuria Telegram post stating its opposition to the LGBT “Kyiv Pride” event.

The Azov movement (namely its political wing, the National Corps), Karpatska Sich, and Tradition and Order have been [described as “extremist”](#) by international human rights watchdog Freedom House and linked to violence by monitoring groups. All three are internationally active. Azov’s [international ties](#) span various European countries and the US and have been the subject of numerous media reports. Karpatska Sich has extensive ties to Eastern European far-right groups, and credibly [claimed](#) in early 2019 that “representatives of brotherly European movements” visited a training camp it held in Western Ukraine. The camp, according to the group, included “military-tactical training.” Both Centuria and Karpatska Sich incorporate the Sonnenkreuz symbol into their emblems.

Tradition and Order is yet another Ukrainian far-right group with a pronounced international presence. In late 2019 the group announced that it had launched a chapter in Germany. It currently [counts](#) notorious international neo-Nazi organizer Denis Nikitin as its international liaison. In May 2020 the group [stated](#) its readiness to provide like-minded Europeans with a safe haven and paramilitary training in Ukraine.

Centuria’s statements were further spread by far-right Telegram channels that are not openly affiliated with particular Ukrainian groups. For example, since early 2020, the group’s messages have been shared by the self-described Union of Cultural Conservatives (@catars_is, over 9,400 followers); the unabashedly neo-Nazi Telegram channels @knpu_division (over 5,000 followers) and @LTERROR88 (now operating as @BOOKSLT, the channel known as “LITERARY_TERRORISM” has over 12,000 followers); and by the now-restricted Scene of Hatred, which at one point had over 6,400 Telegram followers. Other promoters of Centuria statements on Telegram include the aptly named @intolerant_warfighter (over 2,000 subscribers) and @intolerant_historian (more than 5,000 subscribers) channels. The group has also been promoted by @shinobi_blog (over 6,000 followers), a military-themed Ukrainian Telegram channel that routinely shares far-right content.

Some statistical data related to Centuria’s [@european_centuria](#) and [@ArmyCen](#) Telegram channels are currently available at [Tgstat.com](#), a site that provides statistical data on thousands of Telegram channels. Notably, per Tgstat.com, the Telegram channel @european_centuria was already active in February 2018, three months before Centuria’s self-professed launch date of May 2018. A February 24, 2018, [post](#) by the group already contained many of the maxims and self-descriptions that would later be found in the group’s manifesto.

“More Refined and Secretive Work”: Claims of Growing Influence in the Armed Forces of Ukraine and Calls for Mobilization

Since late 2019, Centuria has repeatedly claimed that its members serve as officers in specific units of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. The group has called on Ukrainian servicemen who share its ideology to seek transfers to these units and promised assistance with this process. These claims are consistent with the author’s findings that apparent members of Centuria graduated from the NAA between 2019 and 2021 and went on to join the AFU. The group apparently engages online with members of the military who have expressed interest in joining it and runs a bot dedicated exclusively to mobilization efforts as part of its Telegram presence.

“We are 3 years old and we have reasons to be proud,” Centuria told its online followers [in May 2021](#). According to the group’s Telegram post summing up its achievements, its members currently serve as officers in the AFU, are active in [military?] education institutions throughout Ukraine, and “have succeeded in establishing cooperation with foreign colleagues from such countries as France, the United Kingdom, Canada, the USA, Germany, and Poland.” Just weeks prior, in late April 2021, Centuria had [stated that](#) it “cooperated and participated in joint military exercises with” the aforementioned countries. Per the group’s post, it “routinely” learns from “Western partners.” The post is accompanied by blurred-out photos, some showing Ukrainian and Western military members and others showing uniformed men apparently in front of an RMAS building.

Although, as detailed earlier, the author could corroborate some of Centuria’s claims regarding its NAA presence, etc., the group has become more secretive and careful about posting self-incriminating evidence since it, per its own statements, has shifted its focus to operations within the AFU proper. “Our work has become more refined and secretive,” “Centuria” [stated](#) on Telegram in February 2021, explaining that it had moved from conducting lectures to working within the military, including with “foreign units.” The group also assured its followers that although they might not see Centuria as much, “there is progress being made.” Separately, in January 2021, Centuria [wrote](#) on Telegram that it “operated in secret” and that it called itself a secret organization “for a reason.”

Despite Centuria’s increased secrecy, there are indications that its members may currently be in the AFU, having graduated from the NAA as officers in previous years.

In 2019 apparent Centuria member Roman Rusnyk graduated from the NAA. Rusnyk, under his call sign “Dykyi” (meaning “wild” in English), is one of the two Centuria members the group congratulated in June 2019 on graduating from the NAA. Rusnyk himself contemporaneously posted a photo with a group of people, including himself, with a Centuria banner in June 2019. He is also seen—in another photo he posted on Instagram—holding a banner of the organization on NAA premises, likely during the 2019 graduation ceremony. Notably, another photo posted on social media shows Rusnyk with a patch of the AFU’s 128th Mountain Assault Brigade on his sleeve. Since graduation, Rusnyk has posted photos of himself in military fatigues and apparently [was active](#) on Centuria’s Telegram channel. The apparent tie between Rusnyk and the AFU’s 128th Mountain Assault Brigade is reinforced by a photo Rusnyk posted to Instagram in November 2020, more than a year after his graduation from the NAA. The photo shows Rusnyk and two other men holding a banner bearing the symbol of the 15th Mountain-Assault Sevastopol Battalion, a unit that is reportedly part of the 128th Mountain Assault Brigade.



Image: Photo posted to Instagram in 2019 by apparent Centuria member Serhiy Vasylechko shows fellow Centuria member and 2019 NAA graduate Roman Rusnyk showing off a patch of the AFU's 128th Mountain Assault Brigade.



Image: Screenshot of a November 2020 Instagram post by Roman Rusnyk. The photo shows Rusnyk (right) with two other men holding a banner bearing the symbol of the 15th Mountain-Assault Sevastopol Battalion, a unit that is reportedly part of the 128th Mountain Assault Brigade.

On his now-deleted Facebook profile, Yuriy Gavrylyshyn claimed that he had spent time in the AFU's 10th Mountain Assault Brigade. It stands to reason that he would remain in touch with the unit during his time in the NAA and after graduation.

June 2020 NAA graduate and apparent Centuria member Vladyslav Vintergoller has posted photos with the AFU's 55th Artillery Brigade since graduation. The brigade is based in Zaporizhia, where Vintergoller currently lives. He was likely not the only Centuria member to graduate that year. As mentioned earlier, at the time of his graduation "Centuria" [posted](#) and Vintergoller shared a photo—over which the text "Pride of the Centuria" was superimposed—of a group of seven men (their faces blurred) in parade uniforms at the IPSC, where the ceremony took place.



Image: Mobilization graphic posted by Centuria in June 2021. It features the emblems of those AFU units where members of Centuria allegedly serve as officers. "Mobilization. Enter the army ranks under the command of the best," reads the text.

June 2021 NAA graduate and apparent Centuria member Kyrylo Dubrovskiyi stated on his Instagram that he would be joining the 35th Naval Infantry Brigade stationed in the Odessa region.

At the time of Dubrovskiyi's graduation, Centuria—as is its custom—[made a Telegram post](#) about those of its members who had recently graduated from the NAA. The post features a photo of five men (their faces blurred) in parade uniforms holding a Centuria banner. The photo was taken at the IPSC, where the NAA's officer cadets graduation ceremony [took place on June 19, 2021](#).

Notably, Serhiy Blinov, who can be seen in photos with Centuria figures—including the Nazi salute photo posted in early 2018—was among the 2021 NAA graduates [and appears in a video](#) from the graduation ceremony produced by the NAA's Press Service. Another NAA cadet associated with Centuria, Oleksandr Zbozhnyi, also graduated from the Academy in 2021, according to [photos shared online](#) by his family members.

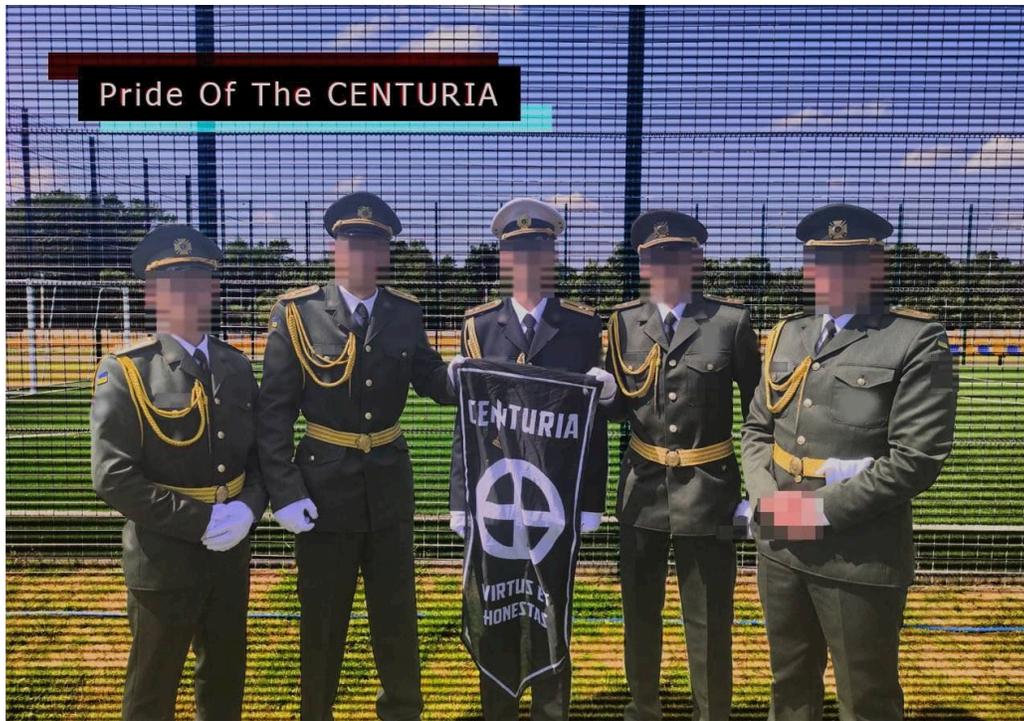


Image: Image from Centuria's June 2021 Telegram post. The photo used in the post was taken at the IPSC, where the NAA's officer cadets graduation ceremony took place on June 19, 2021.

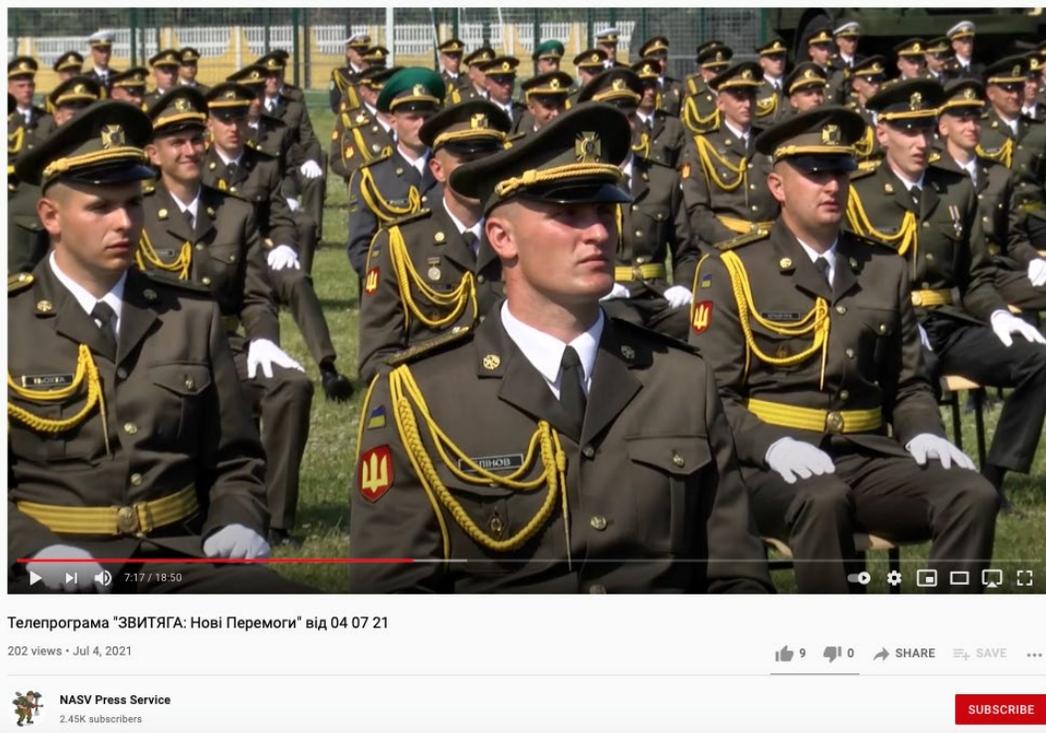


Image: Screenshot from [a video report](#) about the June 2021 officer cadets graduation ceremony shows Serhiy Blinov (center), who appeared in an early 2018 photo of Centuria members making the Nazi salute.



Image: Mobilization graphic posted by Centuria in October 2020 features the emblems of those AFU units where members of “Centuria” allegedly serve as officers. “Mobilization. Enter the ranks of ‘Centuria’” on the front lines,” reads the text.

Several individuals who apparently currently serve in the AFU have suggested online that they are involved with Centuria. For example, an apparent AFU officer and former NAA student Oleksandr Lisitsky [featured](#) a link to Centuria’s Telegram on his Instagram page. Lisitskiy, who appears in photos with American servicemen in Ukraine, did not return the author’s request for comment, sent to an email address he listed on his social media.

The specificity of Centuria’s claims of presence within the AFU is notable. The first of Centuria’s mobilization calls came as early as September 2019, when the group [announced](#) that active-duty servicemen of the AFU could now serve under the “direct command of Centuria officers” and promised additional information via a dedicated Telegram bot. The announcement, [immediately shared](#) by ideologue of the National Corps Eduard Yurchenko, emphasized that the group was seeking candidates who were in good shape, were “ideologically motivated,” and preferably had combat experience. The following AFU units were listed: the 15th Mountain-Assault Sevastopol Battalion, the 24th Mechanized Brigade, and the 35th Naval Infantry Brigade.

Ten months later, in July 2020, Centuria [issued](#) a new mobilization call. This time, the list of AFU units where Centuria officers were allegedly ready to take soldiers under their wing ballooned to eight: the 10th Mountain Assault Brigade, the 128th Mountain Assault Brigade, the 35th Naval Infantry Brigade, the 36th Naval Infantry Brigade, the 16th Combat Support Regiment, the 55th Artillery Brigade, the 24th Mechanized Brigade, and the 25th Airborne Brigade. Centuria also [provided a list of open positions](#). The group again stated that it was looking for “loyalty, ideological commitment, honor, intelligence, nobleness” in applicants and promised “honor, commitment to the idea, combat training, and unit cohesion” in Centuria-led units. The group [reposted](#) the same announcement in October of that year.

In addition to statements about accepting soldiers under its command in the Armed Forces of Ukraine, in November 2020 the group [announced](#) that it was open to cadets and officers from the law enforcement agencies of Ukraine.

Mobilization calls continue in 2021. In March 2021, Centuria [announced](#) that it was accepting applications for the 24th Mechanized Brigade. In April, Tikhomirov posted on Instagram that Centuria was accepting applications for the 406th Artillery Brigade. And in a June [2021 Telegram post](#), the group notified its followers that it “was always ready to accept soldiers and officers into its ranks.” That post included an updated list of AFU units where Centuria members serve as officers and encouraged applicants to write to Centuria’s Telegram bot for more information.

When activated, Centuria’s dedicated Telegram bot, @centuria_mobilization_bot, prompts applicants to answer 15 questions ranging from the candidate’s military experience and the military branch in which they served to their past involvement with “any organizations” and understanding of Centuria’s ideology.

Apparently, members of the Armed Forces of Ukraine do approach Centuria about membership via Telegram. In some cases, users claiming to serve in the AFU [provided specific details](#) as to units in which they [supposedly served](#) and received responses.

For example, in November 2020, a Telegram user whose profile name and photos correspond to those of AFU serviceman Roman Zhyvun [approached](#) Centuria about joining the group on Centuria’s Telegram and was subsequently [prompted](#) to proceed to the dedicated mobilization bot. “I feel close to Centuria’s ideology and learned a lot from its articles as an officer,” the user wrote to Centuria on Telegram. A public asset [declaration](#) filed in 2017 by Roman Vasylyovych Zhyvun indicates that he was serving at that time in an AFU unit stationed in the Zhytomyr region of Ukraine. This seems to partially match the self-description and personal details of Facebook user [“Roma Zhyvun,”](#) who stated on Facebook that he serves in the Zhytomyr-based 95th Air Assault Brigade. When the author reached out to Roman Zhyvun for comment via Telegram, he denied any knowledge of Centuria.

In response to the author's request that the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine confirm the current status in the Armed Forces of Ukraine of Rusnyk, Vintergoller, Lisitskiy, Dubrovskiy, Zhyvun, and Blinov, as well as Danylo Tikhomirov and Gavrylyshyn, Armed Forces of Ukraine information officer Inna Malevych stated over the phone that the AFU did not have sufficient resources to pursue the request. “It may be possible but it would take a lot of time, and the Army is at war, it doesn’t trace people,” Malevych said.

Військкомат CENTURIA

bot

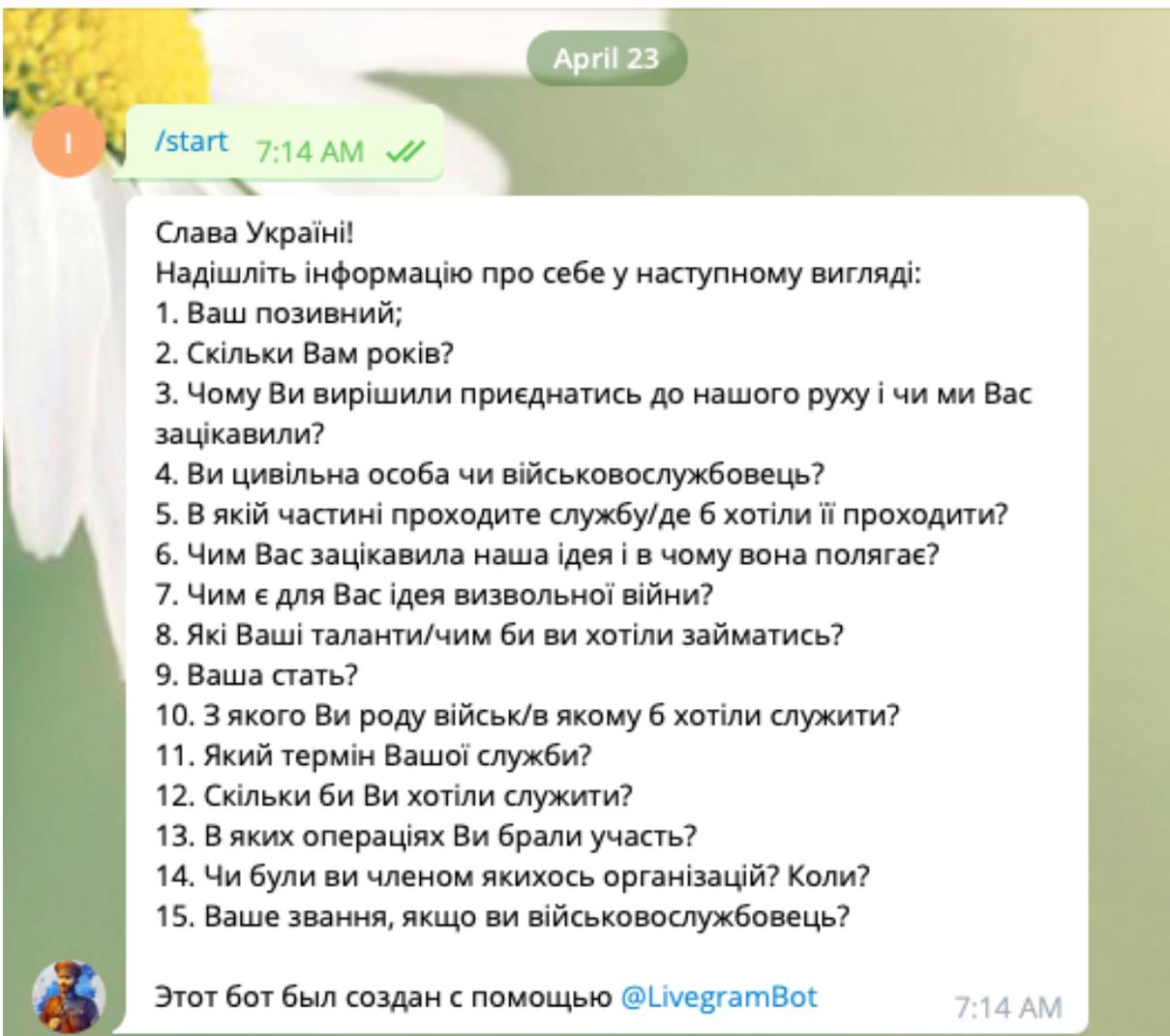


Image: Screenshot of the questions Centuria's mobilization bot, @centuria_mobilization_bot, asks applicants.

Ukrainian Government, Western Militaries Do Not Screen Ukrainian Servicemen for Extremism and the Far Right Has Been Taking Advantage

This research suggests that Centuria’s apparent ability to operate within the NAA and the AFU is not an aberration but rather a reflection of a permissive culture that facilitates the spread of far-right ideology and influence within the Ukrainian military.

An illustrative case is that of Borys Vatsyk. An NAA cadet since 2018, Vatsyk is apparently close to Azov’s political wing, the National Corps: he has appeared in several photos with groups of individuals wearing National Corps T-shirts and holding the organization’s banners. One such [photo](#), posted by Vatsyk to his VK page, shows him during his September 2018 NAA swearing-in ceremony. In the photo, a uniformed Vatsyk can be seen holding a National Corps banner in front of the NAA’s main building; he is surrounded by young people wearing National Corps T-shirts and caps. The photo is part [of a post](#) in which Vatsyk thanks his family and “activists of the National Corps Lviv” on the occasion of his swearing-in. In his social media posts, Vatsyk has apparently expressed [support for fascism](#). His Instagram profile prominently features the motto of the Nazi SS, “Meine ehre heißt treue” (which translates from German as “My honor is called loyalty”). Vatsyk also sports the white nationalist Sonnenrad symbol as a tattoo.

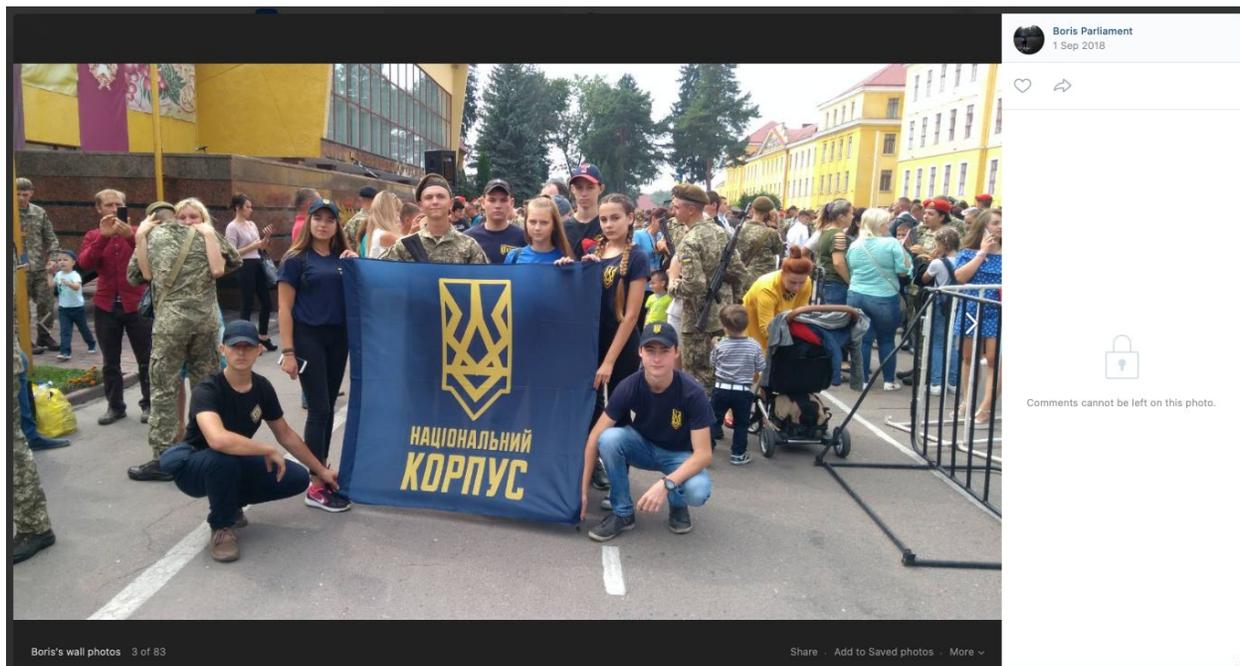


Image: Screenshot of a VK post by Borys Vatsyk shows him holding the far-right National Corps party banner during his September 2018 NAA swearing-in ceremony.

Alarmingly, Vatsyk appears to combine his studies in the NAA with a role as a firearms instructor for the far right. Vatsyk appears [in photos posted](#) in July 2020 by the National-Corps linked Galician Youth group. The photos, [per Galician Youth](#), are from two paramilitary training events (Ukrainian:

вишколи) that took place earlier that month to honor the 14th Waffen Grenadier Division of SS and included firearms and tactical training. The photos show Vatsyk, who sports a Galician Youth patch, instructing participants in the training and as part of a group holding the Galician Youth banner, which prominently features the Sonnenrad symbol. Vatsyk contemporaneously [posted photos](#) from the training to his Instagram page.

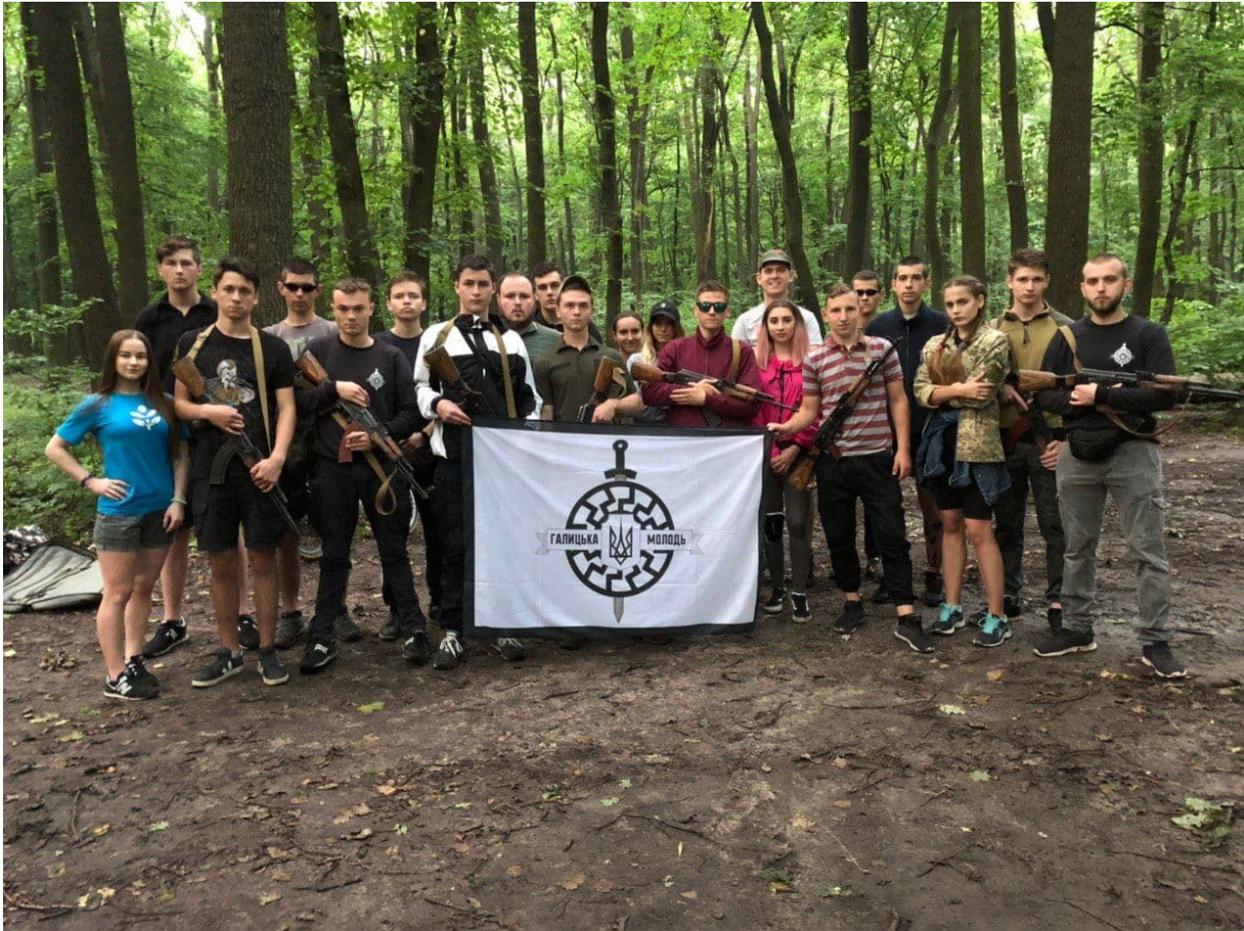


Image: NAA cadet Borys Vatsyk (center, wearing a cap and carrying what looks like a firearm) with participants in a paramilitary training held by the Galician Youth organization.

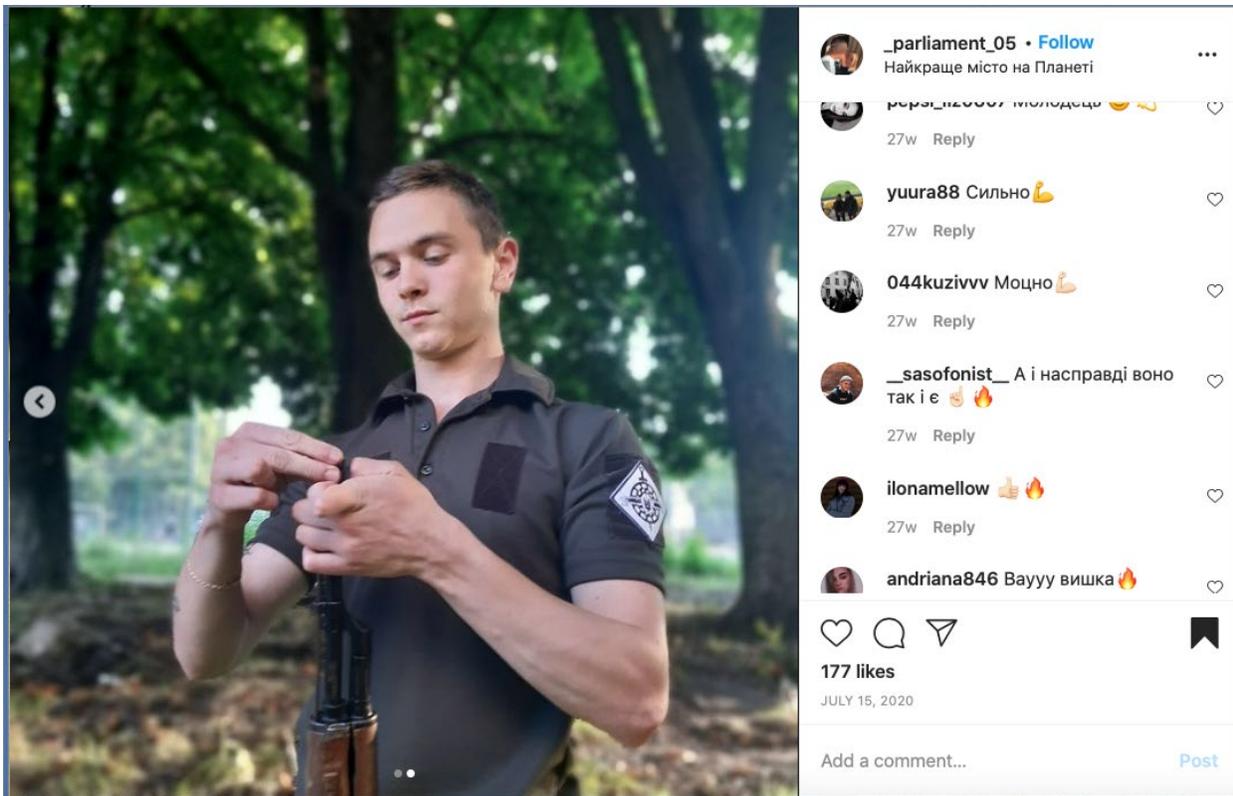


Image: Screenshot of an Instagram post by NAA cadet Borys Vatsyk.

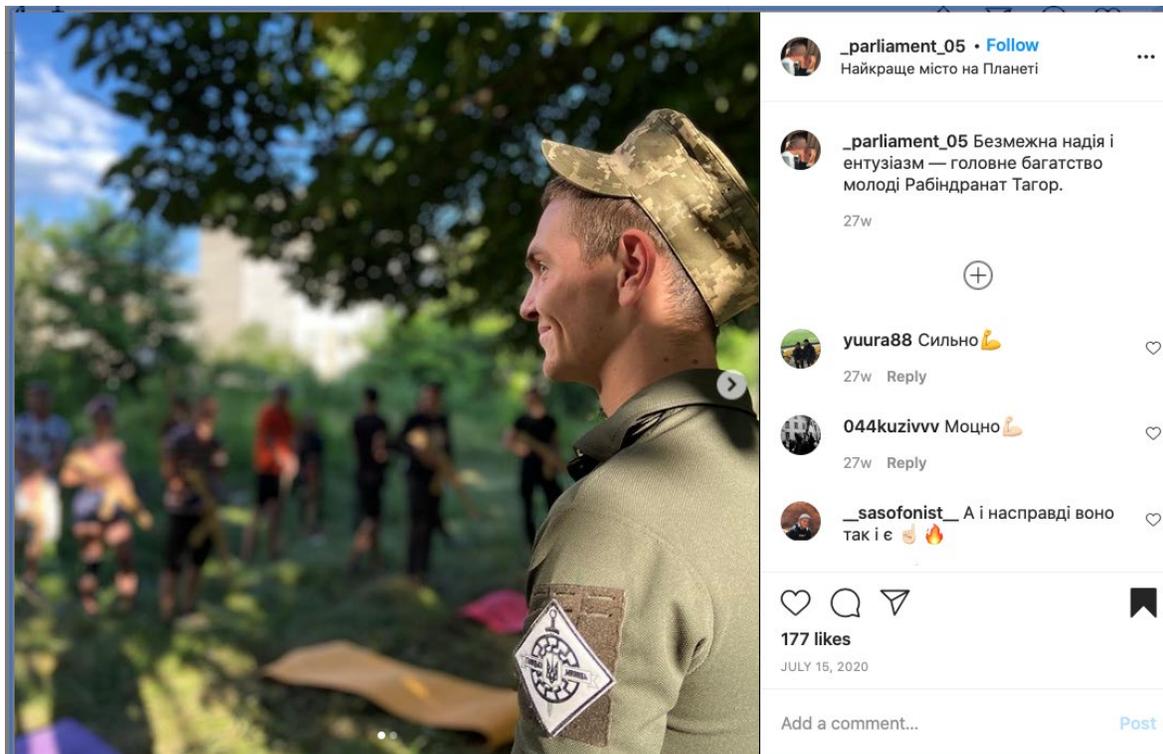


Image: Screenshot of an Instagram post by NAA cadet Borys Vatsyk.

In May 2021, the United Jewish Community of Ukraine, which [reportedly](#) represents 138 Jewish communities and organizations across the country, [accused](#) Galician Youth of spreading anti-Semitic posters in Lviv. The group denied having any connection to anti-Semitic posters and stated that it condemned anti-Semitism and xenophobia. Belying these statements, however, Galician Youth events, patches, etc., feature white nationalist symbols. Moreover, Galician Youth posted to Telegram a photo of the Ukrainian translation of the Christchurch shooter's manifesto. The now-deleted post, archived by the author, showed a hardcover copy of Brenton Tarrant's [Great Replacement in Ukrainian](#) lying on a table next to patches for Galician Youth and the neo-Nazi Misanthropic Division group.



Image: Now-deleted Telegram post by the Galician Youth group shows the hardcover Ukrainian translation of the Christchurch shooter's manifesto, the "Great Replacement."

It is plain to see that the NAA may have a far-right issue. As of July 2021 the NAA's official [Instagram account](#), @army_academy_ukr, featured on the homepage of the NAA website, follows an account with the telling name "[Nur für Arien](#)" (German for "For Aryans only"). The NAA's account, as of July 2021, followed under 60 Instagram pages but had more than 4,500 followers. That account's profile picture is the white nationalist Sonnenrad symbol and its content includes a clip of the protagonist of the movie "American History X" killing a black man, humor making light of Nazism, etc.



Image: Screenshot of an Instagram post by NAA cadet Borys Vatsyk. Vatsyk and another apparent NAA cadet, Andriy Bagmet, are pictured making a gesture that alludes to the Nazi salute.

The presence of the far right within the NAA and AFU detailed by this paper is alarming because that institution is central to the Armed Forces of Ukraine, Western support for that country, and Western military presence there. Foreign military instructors routinely engage with the Academy's cadets at both the Academy proper and the International Peacekeeping and Security Center it oversees. To boot, the Academy relies on Western military advisors, etc.

As the author learned, apparently neither the government of Ukraine nor its key Western partners take consistent steps to screen Ukrainian recipients of Western military training for extremist views or ties to extremist groups. The Ministry of Defense of Ukraine stated via email that its regulations mandating thorough background checks do not include screening for extremist views or ties to extremist groups among those entering the military and receiving military training. The fact that Ukraine does not screen its servicemen and cadets for extremist views and ties is also notable because at least some of its major military partners appear to expect that it does so. The author reached out to the governments of Canada and the US, whose military missions operate out of the NAA's International Peacekeeping and Security Center, as well as to the governments of Britain and Germany. The latter two were contacted in relation to the Kyrylo Dubrovskiy and Vladyslav Vintergoller cases detailed earlier.

Canadian Defence Attaché in Ukraine Colonel Robert Foster told the author in an interview that when it came to screening Ukrainian recipients of training for extremist views and ties, Canada trusted the Ukrainian government to select and identify the right candidates. “It is their responsibility,” Foster said, adding that Canada made it clear that it “will not entertain training extremists or people with dissident views.” Indeed, he told Canada would deny training to Ukrainians who overtly expressed extremist views: “I think we are at a point where, in the event that we did find a Ukrainian that was expressing or showing signs of that type of attitude, then they would be ejected from any training that the Canadians would provide.”

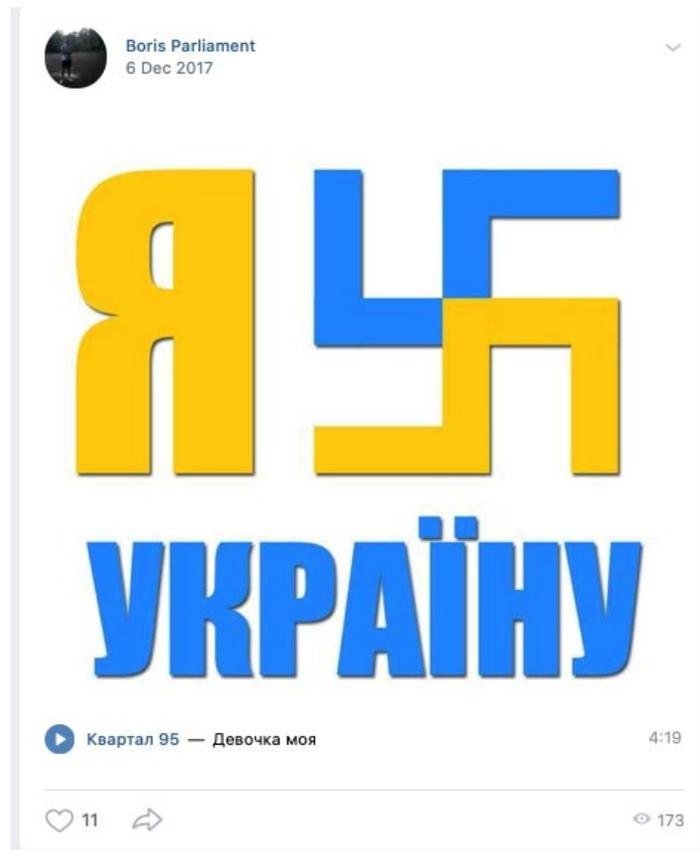


Image: A post on Borys Vatsyk's VK page.

According to Foster, Canada does not tolerate extremist views or conduct within its own ranks. However, the Canadian Defence Attaché noted that in practice, the screening process is a challenge “for any country” because it involves continuous monitoring and requires witnesses of problematic conduct to come forward to be successful.

The Embassy of the United Kingdom was approached by the author because apparent Centuria member Dubrovskiy trained in the RMA. Britain has been training Ukraine’s Armed Forces through [Operation ORBITAL](#) since 2015. Since then, over 20,000 Ukrainian troops have been trained, [according](#) to Britain’s Ministry of Defence. Asked about screening Ukrainian trainees for extremist views and ties, the British Embassy responded via email that “the Armed Forces of Ukraine also operate their own vetting policy for their military personnel, including those selected for international courses.” When it comes to Britain’s own military, the Embassy stressed, “the UK government operates a strict vetting policy for members of its armed forces.”

A German Defense Ministry spokesman told the author via email that the “selection of Ukrainian participants in all cooperation activities with Germany is a sovereign decision of Ukraine. This entails the responsibility for an appropriate vetting process.” By contrast, according to the Ministry’s spokesman, when it came to the vetting of applicants to the German military, “any findings related to terrorist, extremist, and violent events are disqualifying criteria for participation in comprehensive weapons training, and for recruitment into the Bundeswehr, and grounds for immediate discharge from the armed forces.” [According to Ukraine’s Ministry of Defense](#), German Armed Forces Lt. Col. Gregor Brand currently works as Military Advisor to the NAA. As the author detailed earlier, apparent Centuria member Vintergoller attended 30th International Week at the German Army Officers’ Academy in April 2019.

Asked about the screening of Ukrainian military trainees for extremist views and ties, the U.S. Embassy in Ukraine emphasized that using funds for assistance to units of foreign security forces was prohibited where “there is credible information implicating that unit or individuals within that unit in the commission of gross violations of human rights (GVHR).” With regard to the U.S. military, the Embassy noted that “DoD policy expressly prohibits military personnel from actively advocating supremacist, extremist or criminal gang doctrine, ideology or causes. All military personnel, including those in the reserve components, have undergone background investigations and are subject to continuous evaluation.”

Based on the facts detailed in this article, it stands to reason that the Ukrainian government and its international supporters would be well advised to acknowledge the spread of far-right influences within the Armed Forces of Ukraine. Hopefully, this research will prove to be one of many reports to broach this issue.

The author would like to thank the Bellingcat.com Investigation Team for providing advice and insights about the open-source research techniques used in this article.

Oleksiy Kuzmenko shared his early findings and observations about Centuria in April 2019 in a [Twitter thread](#). In September 2019, [Ukraina.ru](#), a media outlet founded by Russia’s state-run Russia Today information agency, published an [article](#) about the group authored by Vladislav Maltsev, who focuses on the Ukrainian far right. Maltsev’s article went over the group’s claims and made a number of observations. In [October 2019](#) Maltsev reported on Centuria’s claims that its members in the AFU would disobey the government’s orders and continue to fight in the Donbass. According to Maltsev, who was reached for comment, he had no knowledge of Kuzmenko’s tweets at the time of writing and discovered Centuria independently.