



Attack on Khanna's resolution unfair

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OPINION – LETTER TO THE EDITOR

From Mark B. Levin, executive vice-chairman and CEO, National Coalition Supporting Eurasian Jewry

Kristofer Harrison's ad hominem attack ("Did California's Ro Khanna get duped by Russia's propaganda?", April 2) on Rep. Ro Khanna (D-Calif.) for sponsoring a resolution in the spending bill to prevent transfer of U.S. weapons to the Azov Battalion does not help Ukraine, the United States or the promotion of values both these countries share.

Harrison's assertion that Azov is one of Ukraine's "most effective defensive units" holds little water against well-documented evidence of the group's neo-Nazi ideology, the bravery of some of these fighters on the front lines in Donbass notwithstanding.

The Azov Battalion's symbol, a combination of the Nazi Wolfsangel and Sonnenrad, is not, as Harrison has previously claimed, a coincidence or mere PR issue, but a direct nod to the group's ethos. Several reports, including in the Daily Beast, The Guardian and Reuters reported on the neo-Nazi leanings of several of the groups' members, including adoration of Hitler. International human rights organizations have raised the alarm on the group's efforts to recruit neo-Nazis in other European countries and on the group's use of torture. Azov unabashedly glorifies ultra-nationalist groups like the Ukrainian Insurgent Army that in some cases joined hands with the Nazis during World War II and the Holocaust.

There is little doubt that the Kremlin uses propaganda and misinformation, including unfounded claims that hyperbolize the presence of neo-Nazis in Ukraine, to delegitimize the Ukrainian government and the pro-democracy ideals of the Maidan Revolution. But contrary to Harrison's characterization, there is also little doubt Azov openly traffics in neo-Nazism. Ukraine's fight against the Russian propaganda machine and its fierce battle for freedom do not give groups like Azov a free pass to espouse harmful views.

Even worse, Azov's free pass plays directly into Russia's narrative. So long as groups like Azov are given a voice, let alone firearms, the Kremlin will use them as fuel for their propaganda fire.

Rejecting ultra-nationalism and neo-Nazism is Ukraine's way forward. Ukraine has come a long way in its pursuit of pro-democracy reform. The United States's support for Ukraine is a natural outgrowth of our shared values and Ukraine's pursuit of an open and free society. It is because of our shared values that the United States must hold Ukraine accountable to disavow groups like Azov, as Congressman Khanna intended.

Washington, D.C.