

C14

AT A GLANCE

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HOW TO CITE

Mapping Militants Project (MMP). “C14” Last modified August 2022.

SUMMARY

Formed: 2010¹

Disbanded: Group is Active

First Attack: April 2015: Pro-Russian journalist Oles Buzyna was shot dead in Kyiv by two masked individuals.² Two members of C14, Andri Medvedko and Denys Poishchuk, were later charged for the murder (1 killed, 0 wounded).³

Last Attack: April 2018: Members of C14, including Serhii Mazur, chased Romani families from their settlement outside Kyiv. The families were attacked with stones and tear gas. After the families were forcefully evacuated from their campsite, C14 members set their tents on fire (0 killed, Unknown wounded).⁴

OVERVIEW

C14 is a Ukrainian ultranationalist paramilitary organization. The group originally acted as a youth wing of the ultranationalist Svoboda Party but transitioned to independent operations in 2014. C14 was originally implicated in neo-Nazi activity, after leader Yevhen Karas spoke at a Nazi march in 2013. In its post 2014 years, C14 has denied allegations of neo-Nazism and taken a natioanlist stance. C14 relies heavily on vigilante violence against pro-Russian separatists and non-ethnic Ukrainians. The group receives state support to fund educational events for Ukrainian youth. In 2018, C14 carried out a pogrom against ethnic Romani people in Kyiv, saw its members tried for the murder of a journalist, and facilitated the kidnapping of a pro-Russian Brazilian national. As of 2018, the city of Kyiv allows C14 to act as a civilian guard patrol unit.

NARRATIVE SUMMARY

Formation

C14 first organized in 2010 as the youth wing of Ukraine's ultranationalist Svoboda party.⁵ According to the Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group, C14 did not deem Svoboda's platform extreme enough.⁶ Svoboda (Freedom) formed in 1991 following the collapse of the Soviet Union.⁷ Reporting Radicalism claims that C14 was officially founded on October 14, 2011, during an annual Ukrainian nationalist march known as Pokrova.⁸ Certain individuals claim that the group's name is a reference to American white supremacist David Lane's fourteen word slogan.⁹ Representatives of C14 claim that C14 represents the anglicized spelling of the Cyrillic word Sich (*Січ*). Sich refers to the political centers of communities populated by the cultural and ethnic Cossack group through the 18th century.¹⁰

In 2010, C14 attempted to antagonize leftist student unions Direct Action and Student Action. The unions were campaigning against allegedly corrupt education reforms. C14 attended anti-reform demonstrations in an attempt to elicit responses from the unions. C14 initially attempted to provoke controversy through media such as anti-Semitic cartoons before turning to violence. The group reportedly perpetrated violence against union members throughout 2010 and 2011.¹¹

In December 2012, C14 attack activists protesting an anti-LGBT+ bill in Kyiv. Early iterations of C14 also staunchly and sometimes forcefully opposed modern development of historic districts in Kyiv.¹²

Neo-Nazism and Denial of Accusations

Early iterations of C14 suggest that the group may have embraced neo-Nazi ideology. A 2011 poster for a youth football cup the group hosted-presumably as the Svoboda youth wing- stated that the event was "for white children only".¹³ In 2013, leader Yehven Karas attended and spoke at a neo-Nazi march in Kyiv. The march was composed of extremist right wing groups from multiple European countries, including Russia.¹⁴ In 2014, however, Karas went on to deny his association with Nazism. Karas reports that he instead has qualms with non-Ukrainian ethnic groups; specifically, he purported to blame national issues on ethnic Russians, Poles, and Jews. Karas later vehemently denied that C14 itself is a Nazi organization, alternatively referring to the group as "Ukrainian nationalists".¹⁵

Anti-Separatist Violence

In 2014, C14 began transitioning to targeted violence against individuals suspected of supporting Russian separatism. . In 2013 and 2014, C14 reportedly fought against what Hromadske International refers to as the "paid thugs" who worked to support Kyiv police during the Euromaidan protests.¹⁶ During the protests, C14 members played a significant role in occupying the building housing the Kyiv City Administration. During the final days of Euromaidan, C14 activists allegedly attempted to take shelter in the Dutch and Canadian embassies to avoid backlash from authorities.¹⁷

In 2014, two unknown men brutally beat Vasyl Cherepanyn in Kyiv. Cherepanyn is a university art theory lecturer and head of the Visual Culture Research Center. Cherepanyn was allegedly attacked on unfounded claims of communist and pro-Russian separatist ideology.¹⁸ Members of C14 and the Svoboda party allegedly took responsibility for this attack.¹⁹

In 2015, two C14 members allegedly murdered Ukrainian journalist Oles Buzyna.²⁰ Buzyna was described following his fatal April 2015 shooting as an “ally” of the Ukrainian “pro-Russian former president Victor Yanukovich”.²¹ In 2017, leftist-activist Stas Serhiyenko was the victim of a non-fatal stabbing. Both Serhiyenko and other left-wing activists alleged that the perpetrator of the attack was a member of C14.²² Leader Yehven Karas allegedly claimed responsibility for the attack online.²³ Later in June 2017, C14 members beat politician Denis Zharkikh. Zharkikh, a member of Ukraine’s Socialist party who had organized a rally for an imprisoned journalist. The group of C14 members who attacked Zharkikh allegedly accused him of supporting Russia’s annexation of the Crimean peninsula.²⁴

In January 2018, C14 organized a blockade of the Kyiv Pechersk Lavra monastery. The blockade was intended to protest the Russian Orthodox’s refusal to bury Ukrainian soldiers that died in the separatist region of the Donbas. In January 2018, C14 also disrupted a remembrance for individuals murdered by Russian nationalists. Instead of punishing C14 members who disrupted the remembrance, Kyiv police detained leftists activists who had participated in the original memorial gathering. When the detained activists left police stations, members of C14 allegedly followed them.²⁵ In February 2018, C14 members staged protests outside a Kyiv courthouse where two individuals were being tried for the murder of Oles Buzyna.²⁶

Vigilante Violence and State Support

In April 2018, C14 carried out a pogrom against ethnic Romani families in Lysa Hora, a natural area outside of Kyiv. A video was later posted online by C14 members. The attack involved armed and masked men using stones and gas canisters to drive families (many of which included young children) out of their campsite. C14 members then set their tents on fire. Despite a social media confession from C14 member Serhiy Mazur, Kyiv police initially declined to investigate the attack. Kyiv police initially denied that the Romani camp had been attacked and attributed evidence of arson to the burning of leftover trash from Romani families. Kyiv police launched an investigation into the incident following increased scrutiny from media as well as witness testimony.²⁷

In 2018, C14 again carried out a vigilante abduction under the pretense of anti-separatism. The group forcefully kidnapped Brazilian national Rafael Lusvarghi in Kyiv. Lusvarghi had previously faced charges in Ukraine for fighting on the side of pro-Russian separatists in Eastern Ukraine. Following the abduction, C14 released Lusvarghi to SBU, Ukraine’s secret service.²⁸

In June 2018, the Svoboda political party and their affiliate C14 received grants from the Youth and Sports Ministry. C14 received almost 17,000 US dollars to fund, amongst other supposed educational ventures, a children’s summer camp. The Youth and Sports Ministry voted unanimously to fund the effort.²⁹ As of 2019, the group was legally registered with the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine as a civil society organization.³⁰ Two years prior, C14 reached an agreement with the city of Kyiv granting the group permission to act as an independent patrol militia. C14 is one of multiple groups whom Kyiv has allowed to act as civilian guard units.³¹

Political Involvement and Role in Russian Invasion

In March 2021 multiple right-wing groups in Ukraine joined together in an attempt to secure seats on the Ministry of Veterans Affairs Public Council. The groups submitted eleven names on

a delegate list. All individuals on the list were elected to the council. C14 leader Yevhen Karas, as well as members Oleksandr Voytko and Andrei Medvedko (suspected murderer of Oles Buzyna) recieved seats on the council.³²

The exact role of C14 as a paramilitary unit in defending Ukraine from Russian invaders remains unclear. In February 2022, Yevhen Karas delivered an address stating that the West had armed far-right fighters because such fighters found killing to be “fun”.³³

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

A. LEADERSHIP

Yevhen Karas (unknown to present): Karas is a Ukranian national and the purported leader of C14. It is unclear but probable that Karas founded C14 in 2010. Karas served as assistant to Svoboda MP Andrii Illenko from 2012 until 2014. Karas received sanctions in Russia and an in-absentia arrest for his role in carrying out an attack on the Russian embassy in Kyiv.³⁴ It is unclear exactly what Karas’s leadership duties entail. Karas often acts as a spokesperson for C14.³⁵

Serhii Mazur (unknown-unknown): Mazur is a member of C14 who helped carry out a pogrom against Romani families outside of Kyiv in April 2018. Mazur confessed to the attack and shared photos of burning tents on Facebook. In June 2018, Mazur was placed under house arrest. Both Mazur and Karas alleged that the pogrom was carried out in cooperation with Kyiv police and the Holosyiv administration of Kyiv.³⁶ Mazur was placed on house arrest following the attack. The house arrest ended in September 2018.³⁷

B. NAME CHANGES

There are no publicly recorded name changes for this group.

C. SIZE ESTIMATES

There are no publicly available size estimates for this group.

D. RESOURCES

In June 2018, the Svoboda political party and their affiliate C14 received the Youth and Sports Ministry grants C14 received almost 17,000 US dollars to fund, amongst other supposed educational ventures, a children’s summer camp. The Youth and Sports Ministry voted unanimously to fund the effort. The ministry has vehemently denied funding C14 itself.³⁸ It is unclear how C14 finances other resources.

C14 has offered to act as paid thugs in order to solicit donations from Ukrainian oligarchs. C14 offered these services through publicly accessible posts on Facebook.³⁹

E. GEOGRAPHIC LOCATIONS

Disclaimer: This is a partial list of where the militant organization has bases and where it operates. This does not include information on where the group conducts major attacks or has external influences.

C14 appears to primarily operate in Ukraine's capital city of Kyiv. It is unclear whether the organization has specific bases and if so, how many bases they operate.⁴⁰

STRATEGY

A. IDEOLOGY AND GOALS

C14 initially organized as the youth wing of the extremist right-wing Svoboda party.⁴¹ Early activities and ideological claims from the group indicate Nazi influence. The inclusion of the number 14 into the group's name draws comparison to white supremacist David Lane's fourteen word slogan.⁴² In the 1990s, a then imprisoned Lane coined the "fourteen words" slogan while imprisoned. The slogan reads, "We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children". The fourteen words have since become a prominent phrase utilized by white supremacist groups, as well as individuals who perpetrate violence in the name of white supremacy.⁴³ The group has vehemently denied Lane's influence on their nomenclature.⁴⁴

In 2011, the group (as the Svoboda youth wing) hosted a youth soccer tournament. The propaganda posters designed to promote the tournament stated that the event was to include "white children only".⁴⁵ In 2013, C14 leader Yehven Karas was a featured speaker at a neo-Nazi march in Kyiv. Attendees at the march included groups and individuals from Russia.⁴⁶

The group transitioned to overtly nationalist rhetoric following the events of Euromaidan and Russia's annexation of the Crimean peninsula in 2014. In February 2014, Yehven Karas denied his association with Nazism. He instead claimed ethnic Russians, Jews, and Poles as scapegoats for social and economic issues in Ukraine.⁴⁷ In 2014, C14 members began targeting left-wing activists and individuals they accused of supporting Russian separatism. The most prominent incidents that highlight the group's proclivity for violent ultranationalism include the 2015 murder of a pro-Russian journalist and a 2018 pogrom carried out against Romani families outside of Kyiv.⁴⁸

B. POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

C14 originated as the youth wing of the extremist right-wing Svoboda party. The group later ceased their involvement with Svoboda but continued to work with right-wing members of Ukraine's parliament.⁴⁹ Multiple members of C14, including leader Yevhen Karas and suspected murderer Andrei Medvedko are currently members of the Public Council for the Ministry of Veterans Affairs.⁵⁰

C. TARGETS AND TACTICS

C14 mainly targets pro-Russian individuals. C14 has also attacked ethnic minorities, and targeted LGBT+ and leftist groups.⁵¹ The group is known to perpetrate attacks on leftist organized events

such as the annual Kyiv Pride March.⁵² In 2018, members of C14 carried out a pogrom against members of the Romani ethnic group.⁵³ C14 has offered to act as paid thugs in order to solicit donations.⁵⁴ C14 generally targets said groups through kidnapping and intimidation.

C14 also engages in paramilitary activities and vigilante violence. In 2018, the group abducted a Brazilian national charged with fighting for Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine. C14 turned the man, Rafael Lusvarghi, over to Ukraine's secret service.⁵⁵ C14 is also one of multiple groups whom Kyiv has allowed to act as civilian guard units.⁵⁶ C14 may be empowered to commit vigilante violence, especially against those suspected of supporting Russian separatism. In 2015, multiple members of C14 allegedly murdered a pro-Russian journalist. C14 has not since committed any murders. The group has committed other non-fatal attacks against leftist and Russian separatists.⁵⁷

MAJOR ATTACKS

Disclaimer: These are some selected major attacks in the militant organization's history. It is not a comprehensive listing but captures some of the most famous attacks or turning points during the campaign.

April 2015: Pro-Russian journalist Oles Buzyna was shot dead in Kyiv by two masked individuals.⁵⁸ Two members of C14, Andri Medvedko and Denys Poishchuk, were later charged for the murder (1 killed, 0 Wounded).⁵⁹

April 2018: Members of C14, including Serhii Mazur, chased Romani families from their settlement outside Kyiv. The families were attacked with stones and tear gas. After the families were forcefully evacuated from their campsite, C14 members set their tents on fire (0 killed, Unknown Wounded).⁶⁰

INTERACTIONS

A. DESIGNATED/LISTED

This group has not been designated as a terrorist organization by any major national government or international body.

B. COMMUNITY RELATIONS

In June 2018, C14 received a grant from Ukraine's Youth and Sports Ministry. The grant was awarded to C14's Educational Ministry and C14 itself with the intention of funding children's summer camps.⁶¹

C. RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER GROUPS

Azov Movement: The Azov Movement is a far-right nationalist network of military, paramilitary, and political organizations based in Ukraine. The primary elements of this network are the National Corps political party and its paramilitary street wing, the National Militia, as well as the Azov Regiment in Ukraine's National Guard.⁶² In 2016, Azov (then under the name

Azov Civil Corps) and C14 are alleged to have perpetrated an attack against a leftist-run social center in Lviv.⁶³

Right Sector: The Right Sector was an ultranationalist Ukrainian political party. Members of the group have previously expressed a desire to “stage a nationalist revolution” in Ukraine.⁶⁴ In 2016, the members of the Right Sector allegedly collaborated with members of C14 and the Azov Battalion to stage an attack against a leftist-run social center in Lviv.⁶⁵

D. STATE SPONSORS AND EXTERNAL INFLUENCES

C14 has received funding from the Ukraine’s Ministry of Youth and Sports with the purpose of funding children’s summer camps.⁶⁶

MAPS

- Global Right-Wing Extremism

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⁹ Cohen, Josh. 2018. “Commentary: Ukraine's neo-Nazi problem.” Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-cohen-ukraine-commentary/commentary-ukraines-neo-nazi-problem-idUSKBN1GV2TY>.

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¹¹ “C14 - Radical right-wing group with youth camps, paramilitary unit and history of violence.” n.d. Reporting Radicalism in Ukraine.

¹² Coynash, Halya. 2018. “Ukrainian 'C14' Neo-Nazis openly offer to act as thugs for money.” Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Groups. <https://khpg.org/en/1520808476>.

¹³ “C14 - Radical right-wing group with youth camps, paramilitary unit and history of violence.” n.d. Reporting Radicalism in Ukraine. <https://reportingradicalism.org/en/dossiers/groups/c14-radical-right-wing-group-with-youth-camps-paramilitary-unit-and-history-of-violence>.

¹⁴ Oleg Onysko. 2013. “До маршу неонацистів у центрі Львова причетні люди зі «Свободи».” Zaxid.net. https://zaxid.net/do_marshu_neonatsistiv_u_tsentri_lvova_prichetni_lyudi_zi_svobodi_n1297854.

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