

Russian Imperial Movement

AT A GLANCE

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HOW TO CITE

Mapping Militants Project (MMP). “Russian Imperial Movement.” Last modified April, 2023. <https://mappingmilitants.org/node/513>

SUMMARY

Formed: 2002

Disbanded: Group is active.

First Attack: June 2014–January 2016: RIM trained and equipped foreign fighters for the conflict in eastern Ukraine, where members of the group’s Imperial Legion fought alongside pro-Russian separatists (unknown casualties).¹

Last Attack: November-December 2022 (approximate): In November and December 2022, six letter bombs arrived at the residence of the Spanish Prime Minister, the American and Ukrainian embassies in Spain, and the Spanish Ministry of Defense. One person was injured and none were killed in the attack. Spanish and U.S. officials blame RIM for the attacks, and U.S. State Department officials claim the attack was ordered by Russian Intelligence services.² One man was arrested by Spanish authorities who are still investigating the attack.³

¹ “Russian Imperial Movement (RIM).” Counter Extremism Project. 2020. <https://www.counterextremism.com/taxonomy/term/1153>. Roth, Andrew. “A right-wing militia trains Russians to fight the next war — with or without Putin.” *The Washington Post*. January 2, 2017. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/a-right-wing-militia-trains-russians-to-fight-the-next-war-with-or-without-putin/2017/01/02/f06b5ce8-b71e-11e6-939c-91749443c5e5_story.html

² Wong, Edward, Julian Barnes, and Eric Schmitt. “Russian Agents Suspected of Directing Far-Right Group to Mail Bombs in Spain.” *The New York Times*. January 22, 2023. <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/01/22/us/politics/russia-spain-letter-bombs.html>.

³ Mosqueda, Sara. “Spanish Authorities Arrest Suspect in Letter Bombs.” Security Management. ASIS, January 25, 2023. <https://www.asisonline.org/security-management-magazine/latest-news/today-in-security/2023/january/spanish-letter-bomb-suspect-arrested/>.

OVERVIEW

The Russian Imperial Movement (RIM) is an extreme-right, white supremacist militant organization based in St. Petersburg, Russia. Founded in 2002, the group promotes ethnic Russian nationalism, advocates the restoration of Russia's tsarist regime, and seeks to fuel white supremacy extremism in the West. RIM maintains contacts with neo-Nazi and white supremacist groups across Europe and the United States. The group has provided paramilitary training to Russian nationals and members of like-minded organizations from other countries at its facilities in St. Petersburg. Members of RIM's armed wing, the Imperial Legion, have fought alongside pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine and been involved in conflicts in Libya and Syria. In addition to its ultra-nationalist beliefs, RIM is known for its anti-Semitic and anti-Ukrainian views. The U.S. State Department listed RIM as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist (SDGT) in April 2020. It is the first white supremacist group to be designated as a SDGT.

NARRATIVE SUMMARY

Stanislav Anatolyevich Vorobyev founded the Russian Imperial Movement (RIM) in St. Petersburg in 2002.⁴ The group initially attracted little international attention, as RIM's early operations focused largely on Russian domestic politics. RIM did not feature prominently in the public record until 2014 when it began supporting the separatists in Ukraine. Its armed wing, the Imperial Legion, set up a training program to prepare Russian militants to fight government forces. RIM attracted additional attention in 2015 when it began asserting a leadership role in the transnational white supremacist movement.

Late 2000s-2013: RIM increases its influence in Russian politics

RIM's activities between 2002, the year of its founding, and the late 2000s are unclear. One researcher characterizes RIM at this time as "a small, monarchist, and ultra-Orthodox movement offering paramilitary and martial arts training in the basement of a suburban building in St. Petersburg."⁵ In 2007, RIM established the Rezerv ("Reserve") paramilitary club in St. Petersburg "to promote a healthy lifestyle and the ideals of military valor based on the values of the Russian Orthodox Church and to study the history of Russian military glory," in the group's own words.⁶ By 2008, evidence suggests that RIM had begun making more of a name for itself in domestic Russian far-right politics. In the late 2000s and early 2010s, RIM engaged in political activism, often in concert with other opposition groups on the fringes of the mainstream.

⁴ "Russian Imperial Movement (RIM)." Counter Extremism Project. 2020. <https://www.counterextremism.com/taxonomy/term/1153>

⁵ Laruelle, Marlene. "Back From Utopia: How Donbas Fighters Reinvent Themselves in a Post-Novorossiia Russia." *Nationalities Papers* (2019) vol. 47, no. 6: 719-733. <https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2019.18>

⁶ Yudina, Natalia and Alexander Verkhovsky. "Russian Nationalist Veterans of the Donbas War." *Nationalities Papers* (2019) vol. 47, no. 6: 734-749. <https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2018.63>

In the early years of its existence, RIM collaborated with other groups on the right wing of the Russian political spectrum. For example, in April 2008, members of RIM joined the ruling United Russia Party and other Russian nationalist and Orthodox organizations for an Easter March in Moscow.⁷ Though precise assessments of RIM's size are difficult to find for this period, it appears that RIM was initially small. In 2008, the SOVA Center for Information and Analysis, a Russian think tank that studies Russian extremist organizations, described RIM as "a dwarfish ultra-right group."⁸

By 2010, RIM was actively engaged in cultivating ties across the domestic Russian far-right movement. In September of that year, RIM joined other nationalist groups to sign a "Declaration of the Russian National Organizations."⁹ This declaration demanded the legalization of nationalist groups in Russia and an end to political repression against them. It also asserted that violence was "unavoidable" in the struggle against the current Russian regime.¹⁰

Not long after the signing of the nationalist declaration in September 2010, RIM joined other Russian far-right organizations in a project to form an umbrella association. However, the Movement against Illegal Immigrants (DPNI) and the Russian Social Movement (ROD) disagreed on plans for integrating the groups, which resulted in two parallel processes unfolding at the same time.¹¹ DPNI's umbrella, the Russians Ethno-Political Association (REPA, known as the "Russians") was established in April 2011 with the goal of aggregating the far right's resources and creating a united front for maximum impact in Russian politics.¹² A second umbrella group emerged in September

⁷ Verkhovsky, Alexander, ed. "Galina Kozhevnikova. Spring-2008: Depression and Déjà Vu." SOVA Center for Information and Analysis. August 18, 2008. https://www.sova-center.ru/en/xenophobia/reports-analyses/2008/08/d13944/#_ftnref6

⁸ Verkhovsky, Alexander, ed. "Galina Kozhevnikova. Spring-2008: Depression and Déjà Vu." SOVA Center for Information and Analysis. August 18, 2008. https://www.sova-center.ru/en/xenophobia/reports-analyses/2008/08/d13944/#_ftnref6

⁹ Other far-right groups that signed the declaration included the Russian All-National Union (RONS), Russian Citizens Union (RGS), Russian Social Movement (ROD), Movement against Illegal Immigrants (DPNI), the National Socialist Initiative (NSI), the Union of the Russian People (SRN), the Slavic Force (SS), and the National Democratic Party of Russia (NDP). For more information, see Verkhovsky, Alexander and Galina Kozhevnikova. "The Phantom of Manezhnaya Square: Radical Nationalism and Efforts to Counteract It in 2010." SOVA Center for Information and Analysis. May 5, 2011. <https://www.sova-center.ru/en/xenophobia/reports-analyses/2011/05/d21561/>.

¹⁰ Verkhovsky, Alexander and Galina Kozhevnikova. "The Phantom of Manezhnaya Square: Radical Nationalism and Efforts to Counteract It in 2010." SOVA Center for Information and Analysis. May 5, 2011. <https://www.sova-center.ru/en/xenophobia/reports-analyses/2011/05/d21561/>

¹¹ Yudina, Natalia and Vera Alperovich. "Spring 2011: Causes Célèbres and New Ultra-right Formations." SOVA Center for Information and Analysis. July 12, 2011. <https://www.sova-center.ru/en/xenophobia/reports-analyses/2011/07/d22101/>

¹² Yudina, Natalia and Vera Alperovich. "Spring 2011: Causes Célèbres and New Ultra-right Formations." SOVA Center for Information and Analysis. July 12, 2011. <https://www.sova-center.ru/en/xenophobia/reports-analyses/2011/07/d22101/>

2011 when ROD founded Russian Platform (RP).¹³ The dueling umbrella associations clashed both over leadership of the Russian far-right movement and over ideology. REPA was reportedly more extremist and partially neo-Nazi in its membership. RP presented a more moderate face, though it did not rule out the use of violence.¹⁴

RIM first joined DPNI's umbrella group, REPA. The umbrella's leadership positions were distributed among the constituent organizations. This included RIM and other signatories of the Declaration of the Russian National Organizations.¹⁵ Pivoting away from overtly xenophobic or racist language, Russian far-right groups framed their platforms in the language of ethnic nationalism, seeking to shed their reputation as "political untouchables" and participate in politics as an organized component of the opposition to the Russian regime.¹⁶

In what appears to be a strategic triangulation, RIM also joined the rival umbrella, ROD's umbrella group later in 2011. In September 2011, ROD founded the RP umbrella and welcomed RIM, Russian Citizens Union (RGS, another signatory of the 2010 declaration), and the Moscow Defense League, among other smaller organizations.¹⁷ RIM's dual membership in REPA and RP may be the artifact of strategic maneuvering by the group. Analysts have concluded that RIM saw RP as having a higher chance of success, which is why it decided to join RP even after it had already claimed membership in REPA.¹⁸ It is also possible that RIM considered RP's less extremist outlook relative to REPA to be more likely to appeal to the public.

¹³ Yudina, Natalia and Vera Alperovich. "Autumn 2011: The Ultra-right's Pre-Election Maneuvers." SOVA Center for Information and Analysis. February 14, 2012. <https://www.sova-center.ru/en/xenophobia/reports-analyses/2012/02/d23665/>

¹⁴ Yudina, Natalia, Vera Alperovich, and Alexander Verkhovskiy. "Between Manezhnaya and Bolotnaya: Xenophobia and Radical Nationalism in Russia, and Efforts to Counteract Them in 2011." SOVA Center for Information and Analysis. April 5, 2012. <https://www.sova-center.ru/en/xenophobia/reports-analyses/2012/04/d24088/>

¹⁵ Groups with leadership positions in the umbrella group included the Movement against Illegal Immigrants (DPNI), the National Socialist Initiative (NSI), the Union of the Russian People (SRN), the Slavic Force (SS), and the National Democratic Party of Russia (NDP). It also included the Memory Russian Liberation Front, which did not sign the Declaration of the Russian National Organizations. For more information, see Yudina, Natalia and Vera Alperovich. "Spring 2011: Causes Célèbres and New Ultra-right Formations." SOVA Center for Information and Analysis. July 12, 2011. <https://www.sova-center.ru/en/xenophobia/reports-analyses/2011/07/d22101/>

¹⁶ Yudina, Natalia, Vera Alperovich, and Alexander Verkhovskiy. "Between Manezhnaya and Bolotnaya: Xenophobia and Radical Nationalism in Russia, and Efforts to Counteract Them in 2011." SOVA Center for Information and Analysis. April 5, 2012. <https://www.sova-center.ru/en/xenophobia/reports-analyses/2012/04/d24088/>

¹⁷ Yudina, Natalia and Vera Alperovich. "Autumn 2011: The Ultra-right's Pre-Election Maneuvers." SOVA Center for Information and Analysis. February 14, 2012. <https://www.sova-center.ru/en/xenophobia/reports-analyses/2012/02/d23665/>

¹⁸ Yudina, Natalia, Vera Alperovich, and Alexander Verkhovskiy. "Between Manezhnaya and Bolotnaya: Xenophobia and Radical Nationalism in Russia, and Efforts to Counteract Them in 2011." SOVA Center for Information and Analysis. April 5, 2012. <https://www.sova-center.ru/en/xenophobia/reports-analyses/2012/04/d24088/>

In late 2011 and early 2012, both the RP and REPA umbrella groups decided to form political parties. This action came in response to then-Russian President Dmitry Medvedev's introduction of a law simplifying political party registration in December 2011.¹⁹ In early 2012, RIM and several other of RP's constituent organizations participated in a working group to create the New Force, a nationalist party.²⁰ Though the party's manifesto professes to respect liberal and democratic values, the New Force proposes restricting immigration to ethnic Russians and holding undocumented immigrants in labor camps prior to their deportation.²¹ The party tries to appeal to more moderate nationalists as opposed to neo-Nazis.²²

In April 2012, REPA leaders announced their intention to create their own political party, the Party of Nationalists, and chose the Russian imperial flag as its symbol.²³ Unlike the New Force, this party was conceived as a "big tent" to appeal to a broader set of ideologies, including neo-Nazis, moderate nationalists, and RIM's audience of monarchists and Orthodox nationalists.²⁴ The development of the party soon stalled, however. A year later, the party lacked a platform or website.²⁵

In addition to networking with far-right groups, RIM sought to participate in the broad democratic opposition to the Russian regime by building relationships with more mainstream groups. In late March 2012, for example, RIM joined organizations from

¹⁹ Yudina, Natalia and Vera Alperovich. "Winter 2011–2012: The Ultra-right — Protest and Party Building." SOVA Center for Information and Analysis. May 7, 2012. <https://www.sova-center.ru/en/xenophobia/reports-analyses/2012/05/d24364/>. Yudina, Natalia and Vera Alperovich. "Spring 2012: Ultra-right on the Streets, Law Enforcement on the Web." SOVA Center for Information and Analysis. July 27, 2012. <https://www.sova-center.ru/en/xenophobia/reports-analyses/2012/07/d24976/>

²⁰ Yudina, Natalia and Vera Alperovich. "Winter 2011–2012: The Ultra-right — Protest and Party Building." SOVA Center for Information and Analysis. SOVA Center for Information and Analysis. May 7, 2012. <https://www.sova-center.ru/en/xenophobia/reports-analyses/2012/05/d24364/>

²¹ Yudina, Natalia and Vera Alperovich. "Spring 2012: Ultra-right on the Streets, Law Enforcement on the Web." SOVA Center for Information and Analysis. July 27, 2012. <https://www.sova-center.ru/en/xenophobia/reports-analyses/2012/07/d24976/>

²² Yudina, Natalia and Vera Alperovich. "The Ultra-Right on the Streets with a Pro-Democracy Poster in Their Hands or a Knife in Their Pocket: Xenophobia and Radical Nationalism in Russia, and Efforts to Counteract Them in 2012." SOVA Center for Information and Analysis. April 26, 2013. <https://www.sova-center.ru/en/xenophobia/reports-analyses/2013/04/d26972/>

²³ Yudina, Natalia and Vera Alperovich. "Spring 2012: Ultra-right on the Streets, Law Enforcement on the Web." SOVA Center for Information and Analysis. July 27, 2012. <https://www.sova-center.ru/en/xenophobia/reports-analyses/2012/07/d24976/>

²⁴ Yudina, Natalia and Vera Alperovich. "Spring 2012: Ultra-right on the Streets, Law Enforcement on the Web." SOVA Center for Information and Analysis. July 27, 2012. <https://www.sova-center.ru/en/xenophobia/reports-analyses/2012/07/d24976/>. Yudina, Natalia and Vera Alperovich. "The Ultra-Right on the Streets with a Pro-Democracy Poster in Their Hands or a Knife in Their Pocket: Xenophobia and Radical Nationalism in Russia, and Efforts to Counteract Them in 2012." SOVA Center for Information and Analysis. April 26, 2013. <https://www.sova-center.ru/en/xenophobia/reports-analyses/2013/04/d26972/>

²⁵ Yudina, Natalia and Vera Alperovich. "The Ultra-Right on the Streets with a Pro-Democracy Poster in Their Hands or a Knife in Their Pocket: Xenophobia and Radical Nationalism in Russia, and Efforts to Counteract Them in 2012." SOVA Center for Information and Analysis. April 26, 2013. <https://www.sova-center.ru/en/xenophobia/reports-analyses/2013/04/d26972/>

across the political spectrum for a march against Putin in Moscow.²⁶ The group participated in a similar opposition rally in St. Petersburg in December 2012.²⁷ In October 2012, RIM's leader, Stanislav Vorobyev, unsuccessfully sought election to the Opposition Coordination Council, a governing body of the opposition with seats for each category of opposition group: nationalist (like RIM), leftist, and liberal.²⁸

Despite its growing outreach to the mainstream opposition, RIM continued to work closely with other far-right organizations. In April 2013, the group joined its peers in REPA to picket a subway station in St. Petersburg.²⁹ In August 2013, RIM and other far-right organizations staged a demonstration against immigration and crime committed by immigrants in the southeastern Russian city of Voronezh, the group's first recorded activity in that city.³⁰

2014-2016: RIM extends its influence to Ukraine

The year 2014 served as a turning point for RIM. Russia annexed Crimea, and conflict erupted in eastern Ukraine between government forces and pro-Russian separatists. These developments jolted inter-group relations in the Russian far right and led RIM to turn its focus beyond Russian domestic politics.

RIM activated its resources in support of the Russian side in the Ukraine conflict from the beginning. Vorobyev has stated that the greatest threat to the Russian nation is “the stability of anti-Russian regimes on all the territory inhabited by the Russian ethnos.”³¹ In its intervention in Ukraine, RIM saw an opportunity to destabilize the Kiev government and further its objective of protecting ethnic Russians.³²

RIM leader Vorobyev and three other RIM members traveled to Crimea on a plane carrying members of Russia's military on February 28, 2014 – the day after Russia

²⁶ Yudina, Natalia and Vera Alperovich. “Spring 2012: Ultra-right on the Streets, Law Enforcement on the Web.” SOVA Center for Information and Analysis. July 27, 2012. <https://www.sova-center.ru/en/xenophobia/reports-analyses/2012/07/d24976/>

²⁷ “Racism and Xenophobia in December 2012, with Preliminary Results for the Year.” SOVA Center for Information and Analysis. January 5, 2013. <https://www.sova-center.ru/en/xenophobia/news-releases/2013/01/d26155/>

²⁸ Yudina, Natalia and Vera Alperovich. “The Ultra-Right on the Streets with a Pro-Democracy Poster in Their Hands or a Knife in Their Pocket: Xenophobia and Radical Nationalism in Russia, and Efforts to Counteract Them in 2012.” SOVA Center for Information and Analysis. April 26, 2013. <https://www.sova-center.ru/en/xenophobia/reports-analyses/2013/04/d26972/>

²⁹ Yudina, Natalia and Vera Alperovich. “The State Duma Directed Right Radicals Toward New Goals: Xenophobia, Radical Nationalism and Efforts to Counteract It in Russia during the First Half of 2013.” SOVA Center for Information and Analysis. <https://www.sova-center.ru/en/xenophobia/reports-analyses/2013/08/d27659/>

³⁰ “Racism and Xenophobia in August 2013.” SOVA Center for Information and Analysis. September 9, 2013. <https://www.sova-center.ru/en/xenophobia/news-releases/2013/09/d27872/>

³¹ Horvath, Robert. “The Euromaidan and the crisis of Russian nationalism.” *Nationalities Papers* (2015) vol. 43, no. 6: 819-839. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00905992.2015.1050366>

³² Horvath, Robert. “The Euromaidan and the crisis of Russian nationalism.” *Nationalities Papers* (2015) vol. 43, no. 6: 819-839. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00905992.2015.1050366>

annexed the peninsula.³³ In mid-March, RIM leaders – including Nikolay Nikolayevich Trushchalov, the group’s focal point for external relations – met with extreme-right, pro-Russian separatists in the Ukrainian city of Donetsk.³⁴ Around the same time, RIM joined a handful of right-wing Russian political parties, including Rodina, to hold a Moscow demonstration in support of ethnic Russians living in Ukraine.³⁵ The developments of early 2014 breathed new life into RIM’s Moscow branch, which was previously dormant.³⁶

By mid-June, RIM had begun training Russians to join pro-Russian separatists in the conflict.³⁷ RIM provided two weeks of instruction in combat skills before sending groups of five to six fighters from St. Petersburg to the Rostov region of Russia, then across the border into Ukraine and through a “humanitarian corridor” to the Donetsk and Luhansk regions.³⁸ RIM began training recruits at its Reserve Club. In June 2014, the group formed the Imperial Legion Military-Patriotic Club, which served as a second club intended specifically for foreign fighters.³⁹ These two facilities, both located in the St. Petersburg area, host RIM’s paramilitary training courses.

RIM is well known for its paramilitary training program known as “Partizan,” often referred to by the anglicized form “Partisan.” “Partizan” is the Russian word for “Guerilla.” The Partizan program as it currently exists began in 2014 with the goal of training Russians for the Ukrainian conflict.⁴⁰ Denis Valiullovich Gariyev, the head of RIM’s Imperial Legion, began training Russian foreign fighters to join pro-Russian separatist groups in combat against Ukrainian government forces.⁴¹ Gariyev claims that RIM has trained over 300 volunteers for combat in Ukraine.⁴² A researcher with the

³³ “Russian Imperial Movement (RIM).” Counter Extremism Project. 2020. <https://www.counterextremism.com/taxonomy/term/1153>

³⁴ “Russian Imperial Movement (RIM).” Counter Extremism Project. 2020. <https://www.counterextremism.com/taxonomy/term/1153>

³⁵ “Racism and Xenophobia in March 2014.” SOVA Center for Information and Analysis. April 7, 2014. <https://www.sova-center.ru/en/xenophobia/news-releases/2014/04/d29299/>

³⁶ Yudina, Natalia and Alexander Verkhovsky. “Russian Nationalist Veterans of the Donbas War.” *Nationalities Papers* (2019) vol. 47, no. 6: 734-749. <https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2018.63>

³⁷ “Russian Imperial Movement (RIM).” Counter Extremism Project. 2020. <https://www.counterextremism.com/taxonomy/term/1153>

³⁸ Yudina, Natalia and Alexander Verkhovsky. “Russian Nationalist Veterans of the Donbas War.” *Nationalities Papers* (2019) vol. 47, no. 6: 734-749. <https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2018.63>

³⁹ Yudina, Natalia and Alexander Verkhovsky. “Russian Nationalist Veterans of the Donbas War.” *Nationalities Papers* (2019) vol. 47, no. 6: 734-749. <https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2018.63>

⁴⁰ “Russian Imperial Movement (RIM).” Counter Extremism Project. 2020. <https://www.counterextremism.com/taxonomy/term/1153>

⁴¹ Roth, Andrew. “A right-wing militia trains Russians to fight the next war — with or without Putin.” *The Washington Post*. January 2, 2017. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/a-right-wing-militia-trains-russians-to-fight-the-next-war--with-or-without-putin/2017/01/02/f06b5ce8-b71e-11e6-939c-91749443c5e5_story.html

⁴² Roth, Andrew. “A right-wing militia trains Russians to fight the next war — with or without Putin.” *The Washington Post*. January 2, 2017. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/a-right-wing-militia-trains-russians-to-fight-the-next-war--with-or-without-putin/2017/01/02/f06b5ce8-b71e-11e6-939c-91749443c5e5_story.html

Counter Extremism Project describes RIM's program as a "conveyor belt" for foreign fighters into the conflict theater, adding that its combat experience gives the group "street cred" with other white supremacists.⁴³

RIM militants operated under the command of two separatist forces in Ukraine – the Donetsk People's Republic (DPR) and Luhansk People's Republic (LPR). Both the DPR and LPR are breakaway separatist factions in eastern Ukraine said by NATO and Kiev to be backed by Russia. RIM militants first fought under DPR commander Igor Strelkov until his departure from the theater in October 2014. RIM members then moved to fight for LPR leader Alexey Mozgovoi.⁴⁴ RIM fighters later returned to fight with DPR forces before RIM's departure from Ukraine.⁴⁵

The Imperial Legion withdrew from Ukraine in January 2016, though some individuals opted to stay and continue fighting.⁴⁶ In a 2017 interview with *The Washington Post*, Gariyev stated that RIM had left because governmental and oligarchic interests in Russia, Ukraine, and the West had supposedly co-opted the conflict.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, the Partizan training program continued. Participation in Partizan had increased threefold by 2017, according to Gariyev.⁴⁸ Following the Imperial Legion's departure from Ukraine, RIM launched initiatives for its veterans, including a museum and an organization (Veterans of Novorossiia), and began supporting a store that employs injured veterans of the Ukraine conflict.⁴⁹

RIM's involvement in the Ukrainian conflict strained the group's relationships with other far-right organizations. RIM had supported the "Novorossiia" (or "New Russia") project in eastern Ukraine along with other far-right groups, including the neo-Nazi National Socialist Initiative (NSI), National Democratic Party of Russia (NDP), and Russian All-

⁴³ Hume, Tim. "German Neo Nazis Are Getting Explosives Training at a White Supremacist Camp in Russia." VICE News. June 6, 2020. https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/g5p4k4/german-neo-nazis-are-getting-explosives-training-at-a-white-supremacist-camp-in-russia

⁴⁴ "US State Department Designates the Russian Imperial Movement as Terrorist Organization." SOVA Center for Information and Analysis. April 7, 2020. <https://www.sova-center.ru/en/xenophobia/news-releases/2020/04/d42276/>

⁴⁵ Yudina, Natalia and Alexander Verkhovsky. "Russian Nationalist Veterans of the Donbas War." *Nationalities Papers* (2019) vol. 47, no. 6: 734-749. <https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2018.63>

⁴⁶ Yudina, Natalia and Alexander Verkhovsky. "Russian Nationalist Veterans of the Donbas War." *Nationalities Papers* (2019) vol. 47, no. 6: 734-749. <https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2018.63>

⁴⁷ Roth, Andrew. "A right-wing militia trains Russians to fight the next war — with or without Putin." *The Washington Post*. January 2, 2017. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/a-right-wing-militia-trains-russians-to-fight-the-next-war--with-or-without-putin/2017/01/02/f06b5ce8-b71e-11e6-939c-91749443c5e5_story.html

⁴⁸ Roth, Andrew. "A right-wing militia trains Russians to fight the next war — with or without Putin." *The Washington Post*. January 2, 2017. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/a-right-wing-militia-trains-russians-to-fight-the-next-war--with-or-without-putin/2017/01/02/f06b5ce8-b71e-11e6-939c-91749443c5e5_story.html

⁴⁹ Yudina, Natalia and Alexander Verkhovsky. "Russian Nationalist Veterans of the Donbas War." *Nationalities Papers* (2019) vol. 47, no. 6: 734-749. <https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2018.63>

National Union (RONS).⁵⁰ Other groups, including the leadership of REPA and the Slavic Force (SS), opposed the Russian-backed separatist movement because of their opposition to Vladimir Putin's supposed anti-Russian nationalist regime.⁵¹ Supporters of "Novorossiia," however, generally accept that, even if the conflict began as a way to serve Putin's political or mercantile interests, the annexation of Ukraine to Russia is desirable and justifies the means.⁵² As a result of this schism, RIM and several other organizations withdrew from the REPA umbrella association in September 2014. REPA effectively collapsed not long thereafter.⁵³ In December 2014, RIM joined a new coalition of right-wing groups aligned in support of the pro-Russian separatists in Ukraine, known as the Russian National Front. The coalition included several political parties and Orthodox organizations.⁵⁴

2015-2020: RIM builds a transnational network

In the years following its activities in Ukraine, RIM sought to position itself at the forefront of the transnational white supremacist movement. RIM's pivot abroad occurred as the Russian government intensified pressure on nationalist organizations in 2014 and 2015. Only a few groups, mainly those associated with the far-right party Rodina like RIM, escaped close scrutiny from law enforcement.⁵⁵ As part of this new campaign, RIM expanded its contacts with white supremacist groups, especially in the United States and Europe. This networking initiative is reportedly known as "The Last Crusade."⁵⁶

In March 2015, the group attended the International Russian Conservative Forum, a conference for white supremacists held in St. Petersburg and organized by Rodina, a far-

⁵⁰ Yudina, Natalia and Vera Alperovich. "Ukraine Upsets the Nationalist Apple-Cart: Xenophobia, Radical Nationalism and Efforts to Counteract It in Russia during the First Half of 2014." SOVA Center for Information and Analysis. June 6, 2014. <https://www.sova-center.ru/en/xenophobia/reports-analyses/2014/08/d30003/>

⁵¹ Yudina, Natalia and Vera Alperovich. "Ukraine Upsets the Nationalist Apple-Cart: Xenophobia, Radical Nationalism and Efforts to Counteract It in Russia during the First Half of 2014." SOVA Center for Information and Analysis. June 6, 2014. <https://www.sova-center.ru/en/xenophobia/reports-analyses/2014/08/d30003/>

⁵² Yudina, Natalia and Vera Alperovich. "Calm Before the Storm? Xenophobia and Radical Nationalism in Russia, and Efforts to Counteract Them in 2014. SOVA Center for Information and Analysis. April 21, 2015. <https://www.sova-center.ru/en/xenophobia/reports-analyses/2015/04/d31818/>

⁵³ Yudina, Natalia and Vera Alperovich. "Calm Before the Storm? Xenophobia and Radical Nationalism in Russia, and Efforts to Counteract Them in 2014. SOVA Center for Information and Analysis. April 21, 2015. <https://www.sova-center.ru/en/xenophobia/reports-analyses/2015/04/d31818/>

⁵⁴ Yudina, Natalia and Vera Alperovich. "Calm Before the Storm? Xenophobia and Radical Nationalism in Russia, and Efforts to Counteract Them in 2014. SOVA Center for Information and Analysis. April 21, 2015. <https://www.sova-center.ru/en/xenophobia/reports-analyses/2015/04/d31818/>

⁵⁵ Yudina, Natalia and Vera Alperovich. "The Ultra-Right Movement under Pressure: Xenophobia and Radical Nationalism in Russia, and Efforts to Counteract Them in 2015." SOVA Center for Information and Analysis. April 8, 2016. <https://www.sova-center.ru/en/xenophobia/reports-analyses/2016/04/d34247/>

⁵⁶ Oliphant, Roland. "Far-Right Russian group claims Donald Trump labelled them terrorists to win election." *The Telegraph*. April 12, 2020. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2020/04/12/far-right-russian-group-claims-donald-trump-labelled-terrorists/>

right Russian political party.⁵⁷ Other attendees included U.S. white supremacists, such as Jared Taylor, who serves as the editor of the U.S. white supremacist publication *American Renaissance*. Also in attendance were European extreme-right organizations, including Golden Dawn (Greece), the National Democratic Party (Germany), and Forza Nuova (Italy).⁵⁸ In September 2015, RIM leader Vorobyev traveled to Sweden to meet with the Nordic Resistance Movement (NRM), a neo-Nazi group active across Scandinavian countries and spoke at the NRM's "Nordic Days" event.⁵⁹

In June 2015, RIM joined Rodina in co-founding the World National Conservative Movement (WNCM). A network of extreme-right groups from around the world, WNCM opposes pluralism, tolerance, and other liberal values, according to its manifesto. The network promotes the use of violence in service of its ideology.⁶⁰ RIM invited over 50 extreme-right, white supremacist, and neo-Nazi groups from 28 countries to join WNCM, including the National Democratic Party (Germany), Nordic Resistance Movement (Sweden), and American Freedom Party (United States), among others.⁶¹ A full list of WNCM-affiliated organizations can be seen under "Relations with other groups" in this profile. RIM leaders intended the WNCM network to facilitate the sharing of tactical skills across peer organizations and promote their own paramilitary training program.⁶²

In late 2016 and early 2017, members of the Nordic Resistance Movement with ties to RIM conducted a series of attacks in Sweden. Anton Thulin and Viktor Melin traveled to St. Petersburg and participated in RIM's Partizan paramilitary training program in August 2016, receiving 11 days of instruction.⁶³ Between November 2016 and January 2017, the men, with an accomplice, bombed a left-wing bookstore-café, a refugee shelter, and a

⁵⁷ Blazakis, Jason et al. "Inside the Russian Imperial Movement: Practical Implications of U.S. Sanctions." The Soufan Center. April 2020. <https://thesoufancenter.org/research/inside-the-russian-imperial-movement-practical-implications-of-u-s-sanctions/>

⁵⁸ Blazakis, Jason et al. "Inside the Russian Imperial Movement: Practical Implications of U.S. Sanctions." The Soufan Center. April 2020. <https://thesoufancenter.org/research/inside-the-russian-imperial-movement-practical-implications-of-u-s-sanctions/>

⁵⁹ "Neo-Nazis in the North: The Nordic Resistance Movement in Finland, Sweden and Norway." Hate Speech International. N.d. <https://www.hate-speech.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/neo-nazis-in-the-north.pdf>

⁶⁰ Blazakis, Jason et al. "Inside the Russian Imperial Movement: Practical Implications of U.S. Sanctions." The Soufan Center. April 2020. <https://thesoufancenter.org/research/inside-the-russian-imperial-movement-practical-implications-of-u-s-sanctions/>

⁶¹ Blazakis, Jason et al. "Inside the Russian Imperial Movement: Practical Implications of U.S. Sanctions." The Soufan Center. April 2020. <https://thesoufancenter.org/research/inside-the-russian-imperial-movement-practical-implications-of-u-s-sanctions/>

⁶² Omelicheva, Mariya. "Designating the Russian Imperial Movement a Terrorist Organization: A Drop In The Bucket of Needed U.S. Counter-Extremism Responses." PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 653. June 2020. http://www.ponarseurasia.org/sites/default/files/policy-memos-pdf/Pepm653_Omelicheva_Jun2020.pdf?

⁶³ Blazakis, Jason et al. "Inside the Russian Imperial Movement: Practical Implications of U.S. Sanctions." The Soufan Center. April 2020. <https://thesoufancenter.org/research/inside-the-russian-imperial-movement-practical-implications-of-u-s-sanctions/>

campground that housed asylum seekers.⁶⁴ One victim was injured in the attacks.⁶⁵ U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo cited the attacks in his April 2020 announcement of RIM and its leaders' status as Specially Designated Global Terrorists.⁶⁶ The Swedish prosecutor who charged Thulin and Melin has stated that their training by RIM was "a key step in [their] radicalization" and may be where they learned how to operate the explosives used in the attacks.⁶⁷

In 2017, RIM extended its outreach to the United States. The group reportedly offered to provide paramilitary training to the leaders of the August 2017 "Unite the Right" rally of the extreme right in Charlottesville, Virginia. However, both RIM and U.S. white supremacist leaders deny the accusation.⁶⁸ In September 2017, RIM members travelled to the United States with the goal of networking with U.S. citizens.⁶⁹ During RIM's visit to Washington, D.C. and Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, Matthew Heimbach, leader of the neo-Nazi Traditionalist Workers' Party, hosted RIM leader Stanislav Shevchuk and posed with him for a photo in front of the White House holding an imperial Russian flag.⁷⁰ This meeting is reportedly the first between U.S. white supremacists and a Russian far-right organization on U.S. soil.⁷¹

In 2019, RIM accelerated its efforts to build relationships with other groups. RIM leader Vorobyev declared that forging ties with peer organizations would be a primary goal of RIM for the year. Vorobyev attended far-right conferences in Poland, Bulgaria, and Austria. RIM's representative for Western Europe, Stanislav Chevchuk, attended a

⁶⁴ Blazakis, Jason et al. "Inside the Russian Imperial Movement: Practical Implications of U.S. Sanctions." The Soufan Center. April 2020. <https://thesoufancenter.org/research/inside-the-russian-imperial-movement-practical-implications-of-u-s-sanctions/>

⁶⁵ "GTD: Global Terrorism Database." University of Maryland. 2019. <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/>

⁶⁶ "United States Designates Russian Imperial Movement and Leaders as Global Terrorists." U.S. Department of State. April 7, 2020. <https://www.state.gov/united-states-designates-russian-imperial-movement-and-leaders-as-global-terrorists/>

⁶⁷ Huetlin, Josephine. "Russian Extremists Are Training Right-Wing Terrorists From Western Europe." *The Daily Beast*. August 2, 2017. <https://www.thedailybeast.com/russian-extremists-are-training-right-wing-terrorists-from-western-europe?ref=scroll>

⁶⁸ Omelicheva, Mariya. "Designating the Russian Imperial Movement a Terrorist Organization: A Drop In The Bucket of Needed U.S. Counter-Extremism Responses." PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 653. June 2020. http://www.ponarseurasia.org/sites/default/files/policy-memos-pdf/Pepm653_Omelicheva_Jun2020.pdf?

⁶⁹ Gartenstein-Ross, Daveed, Samuel Hodgson, and Colin P. Clarke. "The Russian Imperial Movement (RIM) and its Links to the Transnational White Supremacist Extremist Movement." International Center for Counter-Terrorism. April 24, 2020. <https://icct.nl/publication/the-russian-imperial-movement-rim-and-its-links-to-the-transnational-white-supremacist-extremist-movement/>

⁷⁰ Sahinkaya, Ezel and Danila Galperovich. "Radical Russian Imperial Movement Expanding Global Outreach." VOA News. May 9, 2020. <https://www.voanews.com/extremism-watch/radical-russian-imperial-movement-expanding-global-outreach>

⁷¹ Michel, Casey. "Russian, American white nationalists raise their flags in Washington." ThinkProgress. September 22, 2017. <https://thinkprogress.org/russian-american-nationalists-washington-5bd15fd18eaf/>

conference in Spain put on by that country's far-right National Democracy party.⁷² Vorobyev has identified Germany as the group's next target country for expanding ties with local white supremacist organizations.⁷³ In June 2020, the German government announced its finding that RIM has provided paramilitary training to members of two German neo-Nazi groups – the National Democratic Party (NPD) and The Third Path.⁷⁴ According to reporting from the Argentinian news outlet Infobae, members of the Russian affiliate of the Atomwaffen Division, a U.S.-based violent neo-Nazi organization with international chapters, have also allegedly trained with RIM in St. Petersburg around 2020.⁷⁵ This finding has not been independently confirmed, however.

In addition to its networking activities, RIM has also deployed militants to participate in active conflicts beyond Russia and Ukraine. As early as April 2019 (but possibly earlier), RIM sent fighters to Syria, ostensibly to protect Christians against their enemies in the region, according to the group's social media.⁷⁶ In January 2020, the group acknowledged that two of its fighters had been killed in combat in Libya, where they were believed to be fighting on the side of Russian-backed warlord Khalifa Haftar.⁷⁷ Russia has supported Haftar's Libyan National Army with matériel and mercenaries.⁷⁸ It is unclear when RIM's campaign in Libya began.

By 2020, RIM caught the attention of U.S. counterterrorism authorities. In April 2020, the U.S. Department of State listed RIM leaders Stanislav Anatolyevich Vorobyev, Denis Valiulloevich Gariyev, and Nikolay Nikolayevich Trushchalov as Specially Designated Global Terrorists under Executive Order 13224. RIM is the first white supremacist

⁷² Blazakis, Jason et al. "Inside the Russian Imperial Movement: Practical Implications of U.S. Sanctions." The Soufan Center. April 2020. <https://thesoufancenter.org/research/inside-the-russian-imperial-movement-practical-implications-of-u-s-sanctions/>

⁷³ Blazakis, Jason et al. "Inside the Russian Imperial Movement: Practical Implications of U.S. Sanctions." The Soufan Center. April 2020. <https://thesoufancenter.org/research/inside-the-russian-imperial-movement-practical-implications-of-u-s-sanctions/>

⁷⁴ Hume, Tim. "German Neo Nazis Are Getting Explosives Training at a White Supremacist Camp in Russia." VICE News. June 6, 2020. https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/g5pqk4/german-neo-nazis-are-getting-explosives-training-at-a-white-supremacist-camp-in-russia

⁷⁵ Sierra, Gustavo. "Club Partizan, el campo de entrenamiento militar en Rusia para los neonazis del mundo." Infobae. 14 June 2020. <https://www.infobae.com/america/mundo/2020/06/14/club-partizan-el-campo-de-entrenamiento-militar-ruso-para-los-neonazis-del-mundo/>

⁷⁶ Blazakis, Jason et al. "Inside the Russian Imperial Movement: Practical Implications of U.S. Sanctions." The Soufan Center. April 2020. <https://thesoufancenter.org/research/inside-the-russian-imperial-movement-practical-implications-of-u-s-sanctions/>

⁷⁷ Oliphant, Roland. "Far-Right Russian group claims Donald Trump labelled them terrorists to win election." *The Telegraph*. April 12, 2020. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2020/04/12/far-right-russian-group-claims-donald-trump-labelled-terrorists/>. "Russian mercenary who fought in Donbas killed in Libya." UAWire. January 30, 2020. <https://uawire.org/russian-mercenary-who-fought-in-donbas-killed-in-libya>

⁷⁸ Malsin, Jason. "Russia Reinforces Foothold in Libya as Militia Leader Retreats." *The Wall Street Journal*. June 29, 2020. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/russia-reinforces-foothold-in-libya-as-militia-leader-retreats-11593453304>

terrorist group to be designated by the U.S. government.⁷⁹ This listing requires U.S. financial institutions to block transactions involving RIM, allows for criminal prosecution of individuals who do business with RIM, and puts pressure on social media companies to inhibit RIM's previously robust social media presence.⁸⁰

In 2022, The U.S. Treasury Department sanctioned additional individuals over their support and relationships with RIM. Stanislav Shevchuk was sanctioned for travelling internationally and networking on behalf of RIM. He allegedly spoke for RIM at rallies in Europe, and travelled to the U.S. in 2017 to build connections with American Far Right extremist groups.⁸¹

RIM contributed fighters to the Russian invasion of Ukraine through the Russian Imperial Legion. Several reports, including a report from German intelligence services, have recorded Legion fighters in Ukraine. Specifically these reports claim RIM members were spotted in the Kharkiv region sometime between March and May 2022. It is not publicly known how many RIM members have fought in Ukraine since the 2022 invasion began, or exactly what their operational role is.⁸²

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

A. LEADERSHIP

Stanislav Anatolyevich Vorobyev (2002 to present): Vorobyev founded RIM in St. Petersburg in 2002.⁸³ He has led the group since its inception and was listed as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist by the State Department in 2020.⁸⁴

Denis Valiulloevich Gariyev (at least 2014 to present): Gariyev leads RIM's paramilitary wing, the Imperial Legion. Gariyev is a veteran of Russia's Strategic Missile Forces and holds a degree in history.⁸⁵ In 2009, Gariyev reportedly gave up

⁷⁹ "United States Designates Russian Imperial Movement and Leaders as Global Terrorists." U.S. Department of State. April 7, 2020. <https://www.state.gov/united-states-designates-russian-imperial-movement-and-leaders-as-global-terrorists/>

⁸⁰ "Intelbrief: Russian Imperial Movement Labeled a Specially Designated Global Terrorist Entity." The Soufan Center. April 7, 2020. <https://thesoufancenter.org/intelbrief-russian-imperial-movement-labeled-a-specially-designated-global-terrorist-entity/>

⁸¹ "U.S. Sanctions Members of Russian Violent Extremist Group." U.S. Department of the Treasury. U.S. Department of the Treasury, June 15, 2022. <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy0817>.

⁸² <https://www.haaretz.com/world-news/europe/2022-05-25/ty-article/.premium/denazification-neo-nazi-groups-fighting-alongside-russian-forces-in-ukraine/00000180-fcb7-d338-a3d0-feb763f30000>

⁸³ "Russian Imperial Movement (RIM)." Counter Extremism Project. 2020. <https://www.counterextremism.com/taxonomy/term/1153>

⁸⁴ "United States Designates Russian Imperial Movement and Leaders as Global Terrorists." U.S. Department of State. April 7, 2020. <https://www.state.gov/united-states-designates-russian-imperial-movement-and-leaders-as-global-terrorists/>

⁸⁵ Roth, Andrew. "A right-wing militia trains Russians to fight the next war — with or without Putin." *The Washington Post*. January 2, 2017. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/a-right-wing-militia->

on political activism and began arming and training Russian men with guns. Between 2014 and 2015, he recruited Russians to fight in the Imperial Legion alongside Russian-backed separatists against the forces of the Ukrainian government in eastern Ukraine.⁸⁶ He was listed as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist by the State Department in 2020.⁸⁷

Nikolay Nikolayevich Trushchalov (unknown to present): Trushchalov is RIM's coordinator for external relations. In this capacity, he has worked to expand RIM's activities abroad. For example, he met with pro-Russian separatists in Ukraine shortly before RIM began backing them in 2014.⁸⁸ He was listed as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist by the State Department in 2020.⁸⁹

Stanislav Shevchuk (unknown to present): Shevchuk serves as RIM's representative for Western Europe and is allegedly based in Barcelona, Spain. He also took part in the RIM delegation to the United States in September 2017.⁹⁰ In June 2022, the U.S. Department of Treasury announced sanctions targeting Stanislav Shevchuk for his role supporting RIM.⁹¹

Alexander Zuchkovsky (unknown to present): Zuchkovsky serves as the head of logistics for RIM.⁹² He reportedly participated in promoting the separatist cause in Ukraine and recruiting foreign fighters to join the conflict.⁹³ Alexander Zhuchkovsky fundraised and recruited for RIM on Vkontakte, a Russian social media platform. Since 2014, he allegedly raised over 200 million rubles, more than 2 million U.S. dollars. He has continued using social media platforms to facilitate purchasing military hardware and supplies for Russian fighters in Ukraine. The U.S. Treasury Department states Zuchkovsky taught training at RIM's Partizan training center in St.

trains-russians-to-fight-the-next-war--with-or-without-putin/2017/01/02/f06b5ce8-b71e-11e6-939c-91749443c5e5_story.html

⁸⁶ "Russian Imperial Movement (RIM)." Counter Extremism Project. 2020. <https://www.counterextremism.com/taxonomy/term/1153>

⁸⁷ "United States Designates Russian Imperial Movement and Leaders as Global Terrorists." U.S. Department of State. April 7, 2020. <https://www.state.gov/united-states-designates-russian-imperial-movement-and-leaders-as-global-terrorists/>

⁸⁸ "Russian Imperial Movement (RIM)." Counter Extremism Project. 2020. <https://www.counterextremism.com/taxonomy/term/1153>

⁸⁹ "United States Designates Russian Imperial Movement and Leaders as Global Terrorists." U.S. Department of State. April 7, 2020. <https://www.state.gov/united-states-designates-russian-imperial-movement-and-leaders-as-global-terrorists/>

⁹⁰ Blazakis, Jason et al. "Inside the Russian Imperial Movement: Practical Implications of U.S. Sanctions." The Soufan Center. April 2020. <https://thesoufancenter.org/research/inside-the-russian-imperial-movement-practical-implications-of-u-s-sanctions/>

⁹¹ "U.S. Sanctions Members of Russian Violent Extremist Group." U.S. Department of the Treasury. U.S. Department of the Treasury, June 15, 2022. <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy0817>.

⁹² "Russian Imperial Movement (RIM)." Counter Extremism Project. 2020. <https://www.counterextremism.com/taxonomy/term/1153>

⁹³ Yudina, Natalia and Alexander Verkhovsky. "Russian Nationalist Veterans of the Donbas War." *Nationalities Papers* (2019) vol. 47, no. 6: 734-749. <https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2018.63>

Petersburg. The U.S. Treasury Department announced sanctions targeting Zuchkovsky in June 2022 due to these activities.⁹⁴

B. NAME CHANGES

There are no recorded name changes for this group. According to the U.S. Department of State, RIM is also known as Russkoie Imperskoe Dvizhenie and Russkoe Imperskoye Dvizheniye (both abbreviated RID).⁹⁵ The group's paramilitary wing is the Imperial Legion, also known as the Russian Imperial Legion (RIL) or Saint Petersburg Imperial Legion.⁹⁶

C. SIZE ESTIMATES

The size of RIM's membership in its early years is unclear, but researchers have suggested that RIM is a small group.⁹⁷

- May 2020: several thousand members (Middlebury Institute of International Studies)⁹⁸

D. RESOURCES

Vorobyev, RIM's founder and leader, claimed in a 2015 interview that the group's needs are funded by donations from members of the public.⁹⁹ For example, RIM and the Imperial Legion organized a public concert in St. Petersburg in 2016 to raise money for

⁹⁴ "U.S. Sanctions Members of Russian Violent Extremist Group." U.S. Department of the Treasury. U.S. Department of the Treasury, June 15, 2022. <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy0817>.

⁹⁵ Pompeo, Michael R. "Designation of Russian Imperial Movement as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist, Public Notice 11088 of March 27, 2020," *Federal Register* 85, no. 72 (April 14, 2020): 20804. <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2020/04/14/2020-07835/designation-of-russian-imperial-movement-as-a-specially-designated-global-terrorist>

⁹⁶ Pompeo, Michael R. "Designation of Russian Imperial Movement as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist, Public Notice 11088 of March 27, 2020," *Federal Register* 85, no. 72 (April 14, 2020): 20804. <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2020/04/14/2020-07835/designation-of-russian-imperial-movement-as-a-specially-designated-global-terrorist>

⁹⁷ Laruelle, Marlene. "Back From Utopia: How Donbas Fighters Reinvent Themselves in a Post-Novorossiia Russia." *Nationalities Papers* (2019) vol. 47, no. 6: 719-733. <https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2019.18>. Verkhovskiy, Alexander, ed. "Galina Kozhevnikova. Spring-2008: Depression and Déjà Vu." SOVA Center for Information and Analysis. August 18, 2008. https://www.sova-center.ru/en/xenophobia/reports-analyses/2008/08/d13944/#_ftnref6

⁹⁸ Sahinkaya, Ezel and Danila Galperovich. "Radical Russian Imperial Movement Expanding Global Outreach." VOA News. May 9, 2020. <https://www.voanews.com/extremism-watch/radical-russian-imperial-movement-expanding-global-outreach>

⁹⁹ "Russian Imperial Movement (RIM)." Counter Extremism Project. 2020. <https://www.counterextremism.com/taxonomy/term/1153>

fighters.¹⁰⁰ RIM leadership fundraises through the Russian social media platform, VKontakte.¹⁰¹

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.

RIM is based in St. Petersburg, Russia, where it operates two paramilitary training camps.¹⁰² According to reporting by RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty in June 2020, the group also has branches in Moscow and Nizhny Novgorod, Russia.¹⁰³

RIM has sent fighters to join forces with pro-Russian separatists in the war in eastern Ukraine. The Imperial Legion has been involved in combat in or near Slavyansk, Nikishino, Donetsk, Mariupol, Alchevsk, and Debaltsevo.¹⁰⁴ RIM members have been found to be active in Crimea, the breakaway Luhansk People's Republic and Donetsk People's Republic, and the city of Odessa.¹⁰⁵ Following the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine, German intelligence services reported RIM fighters near Kharkiv in Ukraine.

Its members have also fought alongside Russian mercenaries in the conflicts in Syria and Libya, where RIM has backed Russian-supported warlord Khalifa Haftar.¹⁰⁶ RIM claims that its paramilitary wing, the Imperial Legion, is also active in the Central African Republic, but independent analysts have not been able to confirm an RIM presence in the country.¹⁰⁷ Between 2015 and 2020, representatives of RIM travelled to Austria, Bulgaria, Poland, Spain, Sweden, and the United States to participate in far-right political

¹⁰⁰ Yudina, Natalia and Vera Alperovich. "Old Problems and New Alliances: Xenophobia and Radical Nationalism in Russia, and Efforts to Counteract Them in 2016." SOVA Center for Information and Analysis. May 8, 2017. <https://www.sova-center.ru/en/xenophobia/reports-analyses/2017/05/d36995/>

¹⁰¹ "U.S. Sanctions Members of Russian Violent Extremist Group." U.S. Department of the Treasury. U.S. Department of the Treasury, June 15, 2022. <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy0817>.

¹⁰² Sahinkaya, Ezel and Danila Galperovich. "Radical Russian Imperial Movement Expanding Global Outreach." VOA News. May 9, 2020. <https://www.voanews.com/extremism-watch/radical-russian-imperial-movement-expanding-global-outreach>

¹⁰³ "Report: German Neo-Nazis Training at Russian Terrorist Camp." RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty. June 6, 2020. <https://www.rferl.org/a/german-neo-nazi-training-in-russia/30655860.html>

¹⁰⁴ Yudina, Natalia and Alexander Verkhovskiy. "Russian Nationalist Veterans of the Donbas War." *Nationalities Papers* (2019) vol. 47, no. 6: 734-749. <https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2018.63>

¹⁰⁵ Yudina, Natalia and Alexander Verkhovskiy. "Russian Nationalist Veterans of the Donbas War." *Nationalities Papers* (2019) vol. 47, no. 6: 734-749. <https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2018.63>

¹⁰⁶ "Russian Imperial Movement (RIM)." Counter Extremism Project. 2020. <https://www.counterextremism.com/taxonomy/term/1153>

¹⁰⁷ Blazakis, Jason et al. "Inside the Russian Imperial Movement: Practical Implications of U.S. Sanctions." The Soufan Center. April 2020. <https://thesoufancenter.org/research/inside-the-russian-imperial-movement-practical-implications-of-u-s-sanctions/>

conferences and meet with other like-minded white supremacist groups in these respective countries.¹⁰⁸

STRATEGY

A. IDEOLOGY AND GOALS

RIM's ideology can be considered white supremacist, monarchist, ultra-nationalist, pro-Russian Orthodox, and anti-Semitic. The group advocates the re-establishment of the pre-1917 Russian empire and calls for the Russian state to exert influence over all territory inhabited by ethnic Russians.¹⁰⁹ In pursuit of this goal, RIM has sent foreign fighters to join pro-Russian separatists in combat in eastern Ukraine.¹¹⁰ RIM valorizes the institutions of the monarchy and the Russian Orthodox Church, holding that the former holds all political authority and the latter all spiritual authority.¹¹¹ As such, the group opposes the current regime of Russian President Vladimir Putin.¹¹² The Sova Center, a Moscow-based think tank that researches Russian extremist groups, notes that while RIM cultivates relationships with neo-Nazi groups, its own ideology is not neo-Nazi.¹¹³

RIM's ideology blends ethnic and religious nationalism. The group views the Russian identity as inherently tied to Orthodox Christianity. Analysis of the group's social media show roughly 40% of posts reference Orthodox Christianity. RIM argues many Russian people have disconnected from religion and are being punished by God. RIM inserts itself as a devoted minority living a pure life and serving God. RIM uses this rhetoric to justify violence, stating they use weapons in the hope God will be pleased with their actions.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁸ Blazakis, Jason et al. "Inside the Russian Imperial Movement: Practical Implications of U.S. Sanctions." The Soufan Center. April 2020. <https://thesoufancenter.org/research/inside-the-russian-imperial-movement-practical-implications-of-u-s-sanctions/>; Dixon, Robyn. "Inside White-Supremacist Russian Imperial Movement, Designated Foreign Terrorist Organization by U.S. State Department." *The Washington Post*. April 13, 2020. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/russia-white-supremacist-terrorism-us/2020/04/11/255a9762-7a75-11ea-a311-adb1344719a9_story.html

¹⁰⁹ Gartenstein-Ross, Daveed, Samuel Hodgson, and Colin P. Clarke. "The Russian Imperial Movement (RIM) and its Links to the Transnational White Supremacist Extremist Movement." International Center for Counter-Terrorism. April 24, 2020. <https://icct.nl/publication/the-russian-imperial-movement-rim-and-its-links-to-the-transnational-white-supremacist-extremist-movement/>

¹¹⁰ "Russian Imperial Movement (RIM)." Counter Extremism Project. 2020. <https://www.counterextremism.com/taxonomy/term/1153>

¹¹¹ Gartenstein-Ross, Daveed, Samuel Hodgson, and Colin P. Clarke. "The Russian Imperial Movement (RIM) and its Links to the Transnational White Supremacist Extremist Movement." International Center for Counter-Terrorism. April 24, 2020. <https://icct.nl/publication/the-russian-imperial-movement-rim-and-its-links-to-the-transnational-white-supremacist-extremist-movement/>

¹¹² "Russian Imperial Movement (RIM)." Counter Extremism Project. 2020. <https://www.counterextremism.com/taxonomy/term/1153>

¹¹³ Oliphant, Roland. "Far-Right Russian group claims Donald Trump labelled them terrorists to win election." *The Telegraph*. April 12, 2020. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2020/04/12/far-right-russian-group-claims-donald-trump-labelled-terrorists/>

¹¹⁴ Anna Kruglova Dr. (2021) "For God, for Tsar and for the Nation: Authenticity in the Russian Imperial Movement's Propaganda", *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, DOI: 10.1080/1057610X.2021.1990826

RIM claims two critical threats faced therefore are threats to Christianity, and threats to the Russian identity. The source of these RIM claims come from Islam, liberalism, and the Russian government. Islam is characterized by RIM as barbaric, violent, and wild, and RIM makes unsubstantiated claims of assaults and murder perpetrated by Muslims. RIM also uses Islamophobic rhetoric to support clash of civilizations concepts, which help center their self-proclaimed role as defenders of Christianity. RIM extends their Islamophobia to take hard line anti-immigrant stances.¹¹⁵

RIM groups tolerance, democracy, feminism, and gay rights under an umbrella of western liberalism, and they claim this is fundamentally at odds with true Russians. They argue the West is invading Russia with these liberal values, and call upon Russians to actively resist liberalism in favor of traditional values. They use biblical references, especially Sodom and Gomorra, to characterize homosexuality as sinful and abominable, as well as call for death threats against homosexuals.¹¹⁶

In addition to its goal of restoring a tsarist regime in Russia, RIM seeks to expand its influence in the far-right movement by building ties to white supremacist organizations in Europe and the United States, ostensibly to defend Western civilization.¹¹⁷ As part of this campaign, RIM has attempted to make contact with U.S. citizens.¹¹⁸ RIM's paramilitary training course furthers this mission; leaders view it as a means to prepare fighters for an upcoming civilizational struggle.¹¹⁹ Muslims are barred from participation in the program.¹²⁰

¹¹⁵ Anna Kruglova Dr. (2021) "For God, for Tsar and for the Nation: Authenticity in the Russian Imperial Movement's Propaganda", *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, DOI: 10.1080/1057610X.2021.1990826

¹¹⁶ Anna Kruglova Dr. (2021) "For God, for Tsar and for the Nation: Authenticity in the Russian Imperial Movement's Propaganda", *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, DOI: 10.1080/1057610X.2021.1990826

¹¹⁷ Gartenstein-Ross, Daveed, Samuel Hodgson, and Colin P. Clarke. "The Russian Imperial Movement (RIM) and its Links to the Transnational White Supremacist Extremist Movement." International Center for Counter-Terrorism. April 24, 2020. <https://icct.nl/publication/the-russian-imperial-movement-rim-and-its-links-to-the-transnational-white-supremacist-extremist-movement/>

¹¹⁸ Gartenstein-Ross, Daveed, Samuel Hodgson, and Colin P. Clarke. "The Russian Imperial Movement (RIM) and its Links to the Transnational White Supremacist Extremist Movement." International Center for Counter-Terrorism. April 24, 2020. <https://icct.nl/publication/the-russian-imperial-movement-rim-and-its-links-to-the-transnational-white-supremacist-extremist-movement/>

¹¹⁹ Roth, Andrew. "A right-wing militia trains Russians to fight the next war — with or without Putin." *The Washington Post*. January 2, 2017. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/a-right-wing-militia-trains-russians-to-fight-the-next-war--with-or-without-putin/2017/01/02/f06b5ce8-b71e-11e6-939c-91749443c5e5_story.html

¹²⁰ Roth, Andrew. "A right-wing militia trains Russians to fight the next war — with or without Putin." *The Washington Post*. January 2, 2017. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/a-right-wing-militia-trains-russians-to-fight-the-next-war--with-or-without-putin/2017/01/02/f06b5ce8-b71e-11e6-939c-91749443c5e5_story.html

RIM holds intense hatred for Jews and Ukrainian nationalists, who are often targets of the group's propaganda.¹²¹ In addition to the anti-Semitic and anti-Ukrainian content published on its internet platforms, RIM frequently invokes anti-LGBT rhetoric as part of its "traditionalist" doctrine.¹²² RIM also sees the U.S. government and European governments as enemies.¹²³ RIM opposes the immigration of non-ethnic Russians to Russia, and immigrants have served as targets of the group's demonstrations.¹²⁴

B. POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

In 2012, RIM joined other Russian far-right nationalist organizations in an attempt to make an impact in electoral politics. This activity came after then-Russian President Dmitry Medvedev liberalized political party registration in December 2011.¹²⁵ In early 2012, RIM and several member organizations of the Russian Platform umbrella created the New Force, a nationalist party.¹²⁶ Though the party's manifesto professes to respect liberal and democratic values, the New Force proposed restricting immigration to ethnic Russians and holding undocumented immigrants in labor camps prior to their deportation.¹²⁷ The party tried to appeal to more moderate nationalists as opposed to neo-Nazis.¹²⁸

In April 2012, RIM participated in the creation of a party associated with the Russians Ethno-Political Association (REPA) umbrella association, a rival of the Russian Platform.

¹²¹ "Intelbrief: Russian Imperial Movement Labeled a Specially Designated Global Terrorist Entity." The Soufan Center. April 7, 2020. <https://thesoufancenter.org/intelbrief-russian-imperial-movement-labeled-a-specially-designated-global-terrorist-entity/>

¹²² Sahinkaya, Ezel and Danila Galperovich. "Radical Russian Imperial Movement Expanding Global Outreach." VOA News. May 9, 2020. <https://www.voanews.com/extremism-watch/radical-russian-imperial-movement-expanding-global-outreach>

¹²³ "Intelbrief: Russian Imperial Movement Labeled a Specially Designated Global Terrorist Entity." The Soufan Center. April 7, 2020. <https://thesoufancenter.org/intelbrief-russian-imperial-movement-labeled-a-specially-designated-global-terrorist-entity/>

¹²⁴ "Racism and Xenophobia in February 2016." SOVA Center for Information and Analysis. March 7, 2016. <https://www.sova-center.ru/en/xenophobia/news-releases/2016/03/d33989/>

¹²⁵ Yudina, Natalia and Vera Alperovich. "Winter 2011–2012: The Ultra-right — Protest and Party Building." SOVA Center for Information and Analysis. May 7, 2012. <https://www.sova-center.ru/en/xenophobia/reports-analyses/2012/05/d24364/>. Yudima, Natalia and Vera Alperovich. "Spring 2012: Ultra-right on the Streets, Law Enforcement on the Web." SOVA Center for Information and Analysis. July 27, 2012. <https://www.sova-center.ru/en/xenophobia/reports-analyses/2012/07/d24976/>

¹²⁶ Yudina, Natalia and Vera Alperovich. "Winter 2011–2012: The Ultra-right — Protest and Party Building." SOVA Center for Information and Analysis. SOVA Center for Information and Analysis. May 7, 2012. <https://www.sova-center.ru/en/xenophobia/reports-analyses/2012/05/d24364/>

¹²⁷ Yudima, Natalia and Vera Alperovich. "Spring 2012: Ultra-right on the Streets, Law Enforcement on the Web." SOVA Center for Information and Analysis. July 27, 2012. <https://www.sova-center.ru/en/xenophobia/reports-analyses/2012/07/d24976/>

¹²⁸ Yudina, Natalia and Vera Alperovich. "The Ultra-Right on the Streets with a Pro-Democracy Poster in Their Hands or a Knife in Their Pocket: Xenophobia and Radical Nationalism in Russia, and Efforts to Counteract Them in 2012." SOVA Center for Information and Analysis. April 26, 2013. <https://www.sova-center.ru/en/xenophobia/reports-analyses/2013/04/d26972/>

Known as the Party of Nationalists, this new party chose the Russian imperial flag as its symbol.¹²⁹ Unlike the New Force, the Party of Nationalists was conceived as a “big tent” to appeal to the ideologies of the constituent organizations of REPA, including neo-Nazis, moderate nationalists, and RIM’s audience of monarchists and Orthodox nationalists.¹³⁰ Progress soon stalled, however, and a year later, the party lacked a platform or website.¹³¹

In more recent years, RIM’s direct participation in politics has waned. The group has worked closely with the far-right Russian political party Rodina. Also known as the Motherland-National Patriotic Union, Rodina has partnered with RIM to establish the World National Conservative Movement, an umbrella association of extreme-right groups with common grievances against pluralism, liberal democracy, and tolerance.¹³² Rodina was founded in 2003 by Russian politician Dmitry Rogozin, who later served as Russia’s deputy prime minister from 2011 to 2018.¹³³

C. TARGETS AND TACTICS

Training

RIM is known for its paramilitary training courses. The group conducts exercises at two clubs in St. Petersburg, the Reserve Club (founded in 2007) and the Imperial Legion Patriotic-Military Club (founded in 2014 for foreign fighters to Ukraine).¹³⁴ Its general program includes instruction for classes of 20-30 people in martial arts and combat skills with a variety of weapons.¹³⁵

¹²⁹ Yudima, Natalia and Vera Alperovich. “Spring 2012: Ultra-right on the Streets, Law Enforcement on the Web.” SOVA Center for Information and Analysis. July 27, 2012. <https://www.sova-center.ru/en/xenophobia/reports-analyses/2012/07/d24976/>

¹³⁰ Yudima, Natalia and Vera Alperovich. “Spring 2012: Ultra-right on the Streets, Law Enforcement on the Web.” SOVA Center for Information and Analysis. July 27, 2012. <https://www.sova-center.ru/en/xenophobia/reports-analyses/2012/07/d24976/>. Yudina, Natalia and Vera Alperovich. “The Ultra-Right on the Streets with a Pro-Democracy Poster in Their Hands or a Knife in Their Pocket: Xenophobia and Radical Nationalism in Russia, and Efforts to Counteract Them in 2012.” SOVA Center for Information and Analysis. April 26, 2013. <https://www.sova-center.ru/en/xenophobia/reports-analyses/2013/04/d26972/>

¹³¹ Yudina, Natalia and Vera Alperovich. “The Ultra-Right on the Streets with a Pro-Democracy Poster in Their Hands or a Knife in Their Pocket: Xenophobia and Radical Nationalism in Russia, and Efforts to Counteract Them in 2012.” SOVA Center for Information and Analysis. April 26, 2013. <https://www.sova-center.ru/en/xenophobia/reports-analyses/2013/04/d26972/>

¹³² Arsenault, Elizabeth Grimm and Joseph Stabile. “Confronting Russia’s Role in Transnational White Supremacist Extremism.” Just Security. February 6, 2020. <https://www.justsecurity.org/68420/confronting-russias-role-in-transnational-white-supremacist-extremism/>

¹³³ “Russian Imperial Movement (RIM).” Counter Extremism Project. 2020. <https://www.counterextremism.com/taxonomy/term/1153>

¹³⁴ Yudina, Natalia and Alexander Verkhovsky. “Russian Nationalist Veterans of the Donbas War.” *Nationalities Papers* (2019) vol. 47, no. 6: 734-749. <https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2018.63>

¹³⁵ Yudina, Natalia and Alexander Verkhovsky. “Russian Nationalist Veterans of the Donbas War.” *Nationalities Papers* (2019) vol. 47, no. 6: 734-749. <https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2018.63>

Among the most widely known of RIM's initiatives is its "Partizan" (which is Russian for "guerilla") paramilitary training course. The course is reportedly taught by veterans of the Russian armed forces. It covers bombmaking, marksmanship, medical skills, survival skills, military topography, and other tactics in classes of 10-15 students.¹³⁶ Through this program, the group has provided instruction in combat skills to Russian nationals and members of extreme-right groups from other countries. Participants in the program include two Swedish white supremacists who committed several terrorist attacks in the Swedish city of Gothenburg in late 2016 and early 2017.¹³⁷ Training lasts about one week and consists of daily 12-hour military-style training sessions led by Denis Valiullovich Gariyev, the head of RIM's Imperial Legion.¹³⁸ The syllabus includes training in both urban and woodland assault.¹³⁹

Evidence suggests that students of Partizan may be preparing to fight against the United States or U.S.-aligned forces. One Partizan course is allegedly called "English for Communication with Captured NATO Troops" and includes lectures on the U.S. Army and tips on interrogation.¹⁴⁰ Gariyev has claimed that over 500 students, or "cadets," received paramilitary training from RIM between 2011 and 2017. 300 of these 500 cadets entered the program in order to support the pro-Russian separatists in Ukraine backed by RIM.¹⁴¹ Independent analysts have questioned these figures, suggesting that the true number of RIM recruits to the Ukrainian conflict is likely much smaller given historically low attendance at RIM's rallies and contemporaneous accounts.¹⁴²

¹³⁶ "Russian Imperial Movement (RIM)." Counter Extremism Project. 2020. <https://www.counterextremism.com/taxonomy/term/1153>. Yudina, Natalia and Alexander Verkhovsky. "Russian Nationalist Veterans of the Donbas War." *Nationalities Papers* (2019) vol. 47, no. 6: 734-749. <https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2018.63>

¹³⁷ Gartenstein-Ross, Daveed, Samuel Hodgson, and Colin P. Clarke. "The Russian Imperial Movement (RIM) and its Links to the Transnational White Supremacist Extremist Movement." International Center for Counter-Terrorism. April 24, 2020. <https://icct.nl/publication/the-russian-imperial-movement-rim-and-its-links-to-the-transnational-white-supremacist-extremist-movement/>

¹³⁸ Roth, Andrew. "A right-wing militia trains Russians to fight the next war — with or without Putin." *The Washington Post*. January 2, 2017. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/a-right-wing-militia-trains-russians-to-fight-the-next-war--with-or-without-putin/2017/01/02/f06b5ce8-b71e-11e6-939c-91749443c5e5_story.html

¹³⁹ Gartenstein-Ross, Daveed, Samuel Hodgson, and Colin P. Clarke. "The Russian Imperial Movement (RIM) and its Links to the Transnational White Supremacist Extremist Movement." International Center for Counter-Terrorism. April 24, 2020. <https://icct.nl/publication/the-russian-imperial-movement-rim-and-its-links-to-the-transnational-white-supremacist-extremist-movement/>

¹⁴⁰ Blazakis, Jason et al. "Inside the Russian Imperial Movement: Practical Implications of U.S. Sanctions." The Soufan Center. April 2020. <https://thesoufancenter.org/research/inside-the-russian-imperial-movement-practical-implications-of-u-s-sanctions/>

¹⁴¹ Roth, Andrew. "A right-wing militia trains Russians to fight the next war — with or without Putin." *The Washington Post*. January 2, 2017. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/a-right-wing-militia-trains-russians-to-fight-the-next-war--with-or-without-putin/2017/01/02/f06b5ce8-b71e-11e6-939c-91749443c5e5_story.html

¹⁴² Yudina, Natalia and Alexander Verkhovsky. "Russian Nationalist Veterans of the Donbas War." *Nationalities Papers* (2019) vol. 47, no. 6: 734-749. <https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2018.63>

Not all participants in Partizan join RIM.¹⁴³ Some militants from other far-right armed groups, such as the National Democratic Party of Germany, complete the program and return to their organizations (see the “Relationships with other groups” section of this profile). Other “cadets” are unaffiliated when they seek paramilitary training. RIM’s program, open to anyone who aspires to learn combat skills, was conceived as an on-ramp for recruits to the front in Ukraine and a tool to gain supporters.¹⁴⁴

Kinetic Actions:

RIM militants fought for two separatist forces in Ukraine – the Donetsk People’s Republic (DPR) and Luhansk People’s Republic (LPR). Both the DPR and LPR are breakaway separatist factions in eastern Ukraine said by NATO and Kiev to be backed by Russia. RIM militants first fought under DPR commander Igor Strelkov until his departure from the theater in October 2014. RIM members then moved to fight for LPR leader Alexey Mozgovoi.¹⁴⁵ RIM fighters later returned to fight with DPR forces before RIM’s departure from Ukraine.¹⁴⁶ The Imperial Legion withdrew from Ukraine in January 2016, though some individuals opted to stay and continue fighting.¹⁴⁷ Nevertheless, the Partizan training program continued, and participation threefold by 2017.¹⁴⁸ In 2022, a German intelligence reported Legion fighters near Kharkiv, Ukraine. It is not publicly known how many RIM members have fought in Ukraine since the 2022 invasion began, or exactly what their operational role is.¹⁴⁹

As early as April 2019 (but possibly earlier), RIM sent fighters to Syria, ostensibly to protect Christians against their enemies in the region, according to the group’s social

¹⁴³ Roth, Andrew. “A right-wing militia trains Russians to fight the next war — with or without Putin.” *The Washington Post*. January 2, 2017. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/a-right-wing-militia-trains-russians-to-fight-the-next-war--with-or-without-putin/2017/01/02/f06b5ce8-b71e-11e6-939c-91749443c5e5_story.html

¹⁴⁴ Yudina, Natalia and Vera Alperovich. “Pro-Kremlin and Oppositional – with the Shield and on It: Xenophobia, Radical Nationalism and Efforts to Counteract them in Russia during the First Half of 2015.” SOVA Center for Information and Analysis. August 31, 2015. <https://www.sova-center.ru/en/xenophobia/reports-analyses/2015/08/d32675/>

¹⁴⁵ “US State Department Designates the Russian Imperial Movement as Terrorist Organization.” SOVA Center for Information and Analysis. April 7, 2020. <https://www.sova-center.ru/en/xenophobia/news-releases/2020/04/d42276/>

¹⁴⁶ Yudina, Natalia and Alexander Verkhovsky. “Russian Nationalist Veterans of the Donbas War.” *Nationalities Papers* (2019) vol. 47, no. 6: 734-749. <https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2018.63>

¹⁴⁷ Yudina, Natalia and Alexander Verkhovsky. “Russian Nationalist Veterans of the Donbas War.” *Nationalities Papers* (2019) vol. 47, no. 6: 734-749. <https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2018.63>

¹⁴⁸ Roth, Andrew. “A right-wing militia trains Russians to fight the next war — with or without Putin.” *The Washington Post*. January 2, 2017. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/a-right-wing-militia-trains-russians-to-fight-the-next-war--with-or-without-putin/2017/01/02/f06b5ce8-b71e-11e6-939c-91749443c5e5_story.html

¹⁴⁹ <https://www.haaretz.com/world-news/europe/2022-05-25/ty-article/.premium/denazification-neo-nazi-groups-fighting-alongside-russian-forces-in-ukraine/00000180-fcb7-d338-a3d0-feb763f30000>

media.¹⁵⁰ In January 2020, the group acknowledged that two of its fighters had been killed in combat in Libya, where they were believed to be fighting on the side of Russian-backed warlord Khalifa Haftar.¹⁵¹ Russia has supported Haftar's Libyan National Army with matériel and mercenaries.¹⁵² It is unclear when RIM's campaign in Libya began. The exact number of fighters RIM sends or their precise role in these countries is not known based on publicly available information.

Non-Violent Tactics:

RIM publishes a variety of propaganda content online. Their rhetoric targets a variety of perceived enemies including Jews, Ukrainian nationalists, immigrants, and LGBT populations.¹⁵³ RIM is active on social media platforms. This included Youtube and Facebook until 2020 when the U.S. government designated RIM as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist entity. Since then their digital presence is primarily on Telegram and Vkontakte. It publishes propaganda videos advertising paramilitary training and ideologically narratives. These posts include both Russian and English language versions for mass appeal. RIM uses social media primarily to define its enemies, spread ideological propaganda, and recruit new members.¹⁵⁴

RIM used its online platform to spread misinformation about COVID 19, misdirecting attention to HIV/AIDS to spread disinformation about the LGBT community.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁰ Blazakis, Jason et al. "Inside the Russian Imperial Movement: Practical Implications of U.S. Sanctions." The Soufan Center. April 2020. <https://thesoufancenter.org/research/inside-the-russian-imperial-movement-practical-implications-of-u-s-sanctions/>

¹⁵¹ Oliphant, Roland. "Far-Right Russian group claims Donald Trump labeled them terrorists to win election." *The Telegraph*. April 12, 2020. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2020/04/12/far-right-russian-group-claims-donald-trump-labelled-terrorists/>. "Russian mercenary who fought in Donbas killed in Libya." UAWire. January 30, 2020. <https://uawire.org/russian-mercenary-who-fought-in-donbas-killed-in-libya>

¹⁵² Malsin, Jason. "Russia Reinforces Foothold in Libya as Militia Leader Retreats." *The Wall Street Journal*. June 29, 2020. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/russia-reinforces-foothold-in-libya-as-militia-leader-retreats-11593453304>

¹⁵³ "Intelbrief: Russian Imperial Movement Labeled a Specially Designated Global Terrorist Entity." The Soufan Center. April 7, 2020. <https://thesoufancenter.org/intelbrief-russian-imperial-movement-labeled-a-specially-designated-global-terrorist-entity/>; Sahinkaya, Ezel and Danila Galperovich. "Radical Russian Imperial Movement Expanding Global Outreach." VOA News. May 9, 2020. <https://www.voanews.com/extremism-watch/radical-russian-imperial-movement-expanding-global-outreach>

¹⁵⁴ Dixon, Robyn. "Inside White-Supremacist Russian Imperial Movement, Designated Foreign Terrorist Organization by U.S. State Department." *The Washington Post*. April 13, 2020. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/russia-white-supremacist-terrorism-us/2020/04/11/255a976/>; "Intelbrief: Russian Imperial Movement Labeled a Specially Designated Global Terrorist Entity." The Soufan Center. April 7, 2020. <https://thesoufancenter.org/intelbrief-russian-imperial-movement-labeled-a-specially-designated-global-terrorist-entity>

¹⁵⁵ "The Russian Imperial Movement and Coronavirus." Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey. Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey, April 6, 2020. https://www.middlebury.edu/institute/sites/www.middlebury.edu.institute/files/2020-04/rim_coronavirus_brief2.pdf?fv=N5zmrDfx.

RIM uses Vkontakte to coordinate protests in Russia and internationally. In December, 2021 RIM staged a protest supporting “anti-Serb policies” outside the embassy of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Moscow. A simultaneous protest was carried out by Serbian Action in Belgrade at the Ukrainian embassy.¹⁵⁶ RIM joined several other far-right groups for a February 2016 protest in St. Petersburg against the settling of Syrian refugees in Europe.¹⁵⁷

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.

June 2014–January 2016: RIM trained and equipped foreign fighters for the conflict in eastern Ukraine, where members of the group’s Imperial Legion fought alongside pro-Russian separatists (unknown casualties).¹⁵⁸

November 11, 2016: Viktor Melin, a member of the Nordic Resistance Movement (NRM) who was trained by RIM through the Partizan paramilitary course in August 2016, bombed a left-wing bookstore-café in Gothenburg, Sweden.¹⁵⁹ The U.S. State Department cited this attack as justification for RIM’s Specially Designated Global Terrorist designation (no casualties).¹⁶⁰

January 5, 2017: Viktor Melin and a man with no RIM affiliation, Jimmy Jonassons, bombed a shelter for refugees in Gothenburg, Sweden.¹⁶¹ The U.S. State Department

¹⁵⁶ Kuloglija-Zolj, Nermina. “Russian Far-Right Group Claims to Hold pro-Mladic Protest in Moscow.” *Detektor*. *Detektor*, December 14, 2021. <https://detektor.ba/2021/12/13/ruska-ultradesnicarska-organizacija-pohvalila-se-protestima-ispred-ambasade-bih-u-moskvi/?lang=en>.

¹⁵⁷ “Racism and Xenophobia in February 2016.” SOVA Center for Information and Analysis. March 7, 2016. <https://www.sova-center.ru/en/xenophobia/news-releases/2016/03/d33989/>

¹⁵⁸ “Russian Imperial Movement (RIM).” Counter Extremism Project. 2020. <https://www.counterextremism.com/taxonomy/term/1153>. Roth, Andrew. “A right-wing militia trains Russians to fight the next war — with or without Putin.” *The Washington Post*. January 2, 2017. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/a-right-wing-militia-trains-russians-to-fight-the-next-war-with-or-without-putin/2017/01/02/f06b5ce8-b71e-11e6-939c-91749443c5e5_story.html

¹⁵⁹ “Incident Summary: Global Terrorism Database.” University of Maryland, 2019. <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/IncidentSummary.aspx?gtid=201611110035>. Blazakis, Jason et al. “Inside the Russian Imperial Movement: Practical Implications of U.S. Sanctions.” The Soufan Center. April 2020. <https://thesoufancenter.org/research/inside-the-russian-imperial-movement-practical-implications-of-u-s-sanctions/>

¹⁶⁰ “United States Designates Russian Imperial Movement and Leaders as Global Terrorists.” U.S. Department of State. April 7, 2020. <https://www.state.gov/united-states-designates-russian-imperial-movement-and-leaders-as-global-terrorists/>

¹⁶¹ “Incident Summary: Global Terrorism Database.” University of Maryland, 2019. <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/IncidentSummary.aspx?gtid=201701050030>. Blazakis, Jason et al. “Inside the Russian Imperial Movement: Practical Implications of U.S. Sanctions.” The Soufan Center.

cited this attack as justification for RIM's Specially Designated Global Terrorist designation (none killed, one wounded).¹⁶²

January 25, 2017: Viktor Melin and Anton Thulin, both of whom were trained by RIM in August 2016, attempted to bomb a public campground that housed asylum seekers in Gothenburg, Sweden. Melin and Thulin cooperated with Jimmy Jonassons, a man with no RIM affiliation, when carrying out the attack.¹⁶³ The U.S. State Department cited this attack as justification for RIM's Specially Designated Global Terrorist designation (no casualties).¹⁶⁴

April 2019 (approximate): Researchers have confirmed the presence of RIM fighters in Syria as early as April 2019, though exact dates are unknown. According to the group's social media, the goal of its campaign in Syria is to protect Christians in the country (unknown casualties).¹⁶⁵

January 2020 (approximate): In January 2020, RIM acknowledged that two of its fighters had been killed in combat in Libya.¹⁶⁶ Analysts believe that Imperial Legion militants from RIM are fighting alongside the Libyan National Army of Russian-backed warlord Khalifa Haftar.¹⁶⁷ It is unclear when this campaign began (unknown casualties).

April 2020. <https://thesoufancenter.org/research/inside-the-russian-imperial-movement-practical-implications-of-u-s-sanctions/>

¹⁶² "United States Designates Russian Imperial Movement and Leaders as Global Terrorists." U.S. Department of State. April 7, 2020. <https://www.state.gov/united-states-designates-russian-imperial-movement-and-leaders-as-global-terrorists/>

¹⁶³ "Incident Summary: Global Terrorism Database." University of Maryland, 2019. <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/IncidentSummary.aspx?gtid=201701250041>. Blazakis, Jason et al. "Inside the Russian Imperial Movement: Practical Implications of U.S. Sanctions." The Soufan Center. April 2020. <https://thesoufancenter.org/research/inside-the-russian-imperial-movement-practical-implications-of-u-s-sanctions/>

¹⁶⁴ "United States Designates Russian Imperial Movement and Leaders as Global Terrorists." U.S. Department of State. April 7, 2020. <https://www.state.gov/united-states-designates-russian-imperial-movement-and-leaders-as-global-terrorists/>

¹⁶⁵ Blazakis, Jason et al. "Inside the Russian Imperial Movement: Practical Implications of U.S. Sanctions." The Soufan Center. April 2020. <https://thesoufancenter.org/research/inside-the-russian-imperial-movement-practical-implications-of-u-s-sanctions/>

¹⁶⁶ Oliphant, Roland. "Far-Right Russian group claims Donald Trump labelled them terrorists to win election." *The Telegraph*. April 12, 2020. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2020/04/12/far-right-russian-group-claims-donald-trump-labelled-terrorists/>. "Russian mercenary who fought in Donbas killed in Libya." UAWire. January 30, 2020. <https://uawire.org/russian-mercenary-who-fought-in-donbas-killed-in-libya>

¹⁶⁷ Malsin, Jason. "Russia Reinforces Foothold in Libya as Militia Leader Retreats." *The Wall Street Journal*. June 29, 2020. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/russia-reinforces-foothold-in-libya-as-militia-leader-retreats-11593453304>. Oliphant, Roland. "Far-Right Russian group claims Donald Trump labelled them terrorists to win election." *The Telegraph*. April 12, 2020. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2020/04/12/far-right-russian-group-claims-donald-trump-labelled-terrorists/>. Blazakis, Jason et al. "Inside the Russian Imperial Movement: Practical Implications of U.S. Sanctions." The Soufan Center. April 2020. <https://thesoufancenter.org/research/inside-the-russian-imperial-movement-practical-implications-of-u-s-sanctions/>

November-December 2022 (approximate): In November and December 2022, six letter bombs arrived at the residence of the Spanish Prime Minister, the American and Ukrainian embassies in Spain, and the Spanish Ministry of Defense. One person was injured and none were killed in the attack. Spanish and U.S. officials blame RIM for the attacks, and U.S. State Department officials claim the attack was ordered by Russian Intelligence services.¹⁶⁸ One man was arrested by Spanish authorities who are still investigating the attack.¹⁶⁹

INTERACTIONS

A. DESIGNATED/LISTED

RIM and its leaders Stanislav Anatolyevich Vorobyev, Denis Valiulloovich Gariyev, and Nikolay Nikolayevich Trushchalov have been listed as Specially Designated Global Terrorists (SDGT) by the U.S. Department of State. This is the first time that a white supremacist organization has been designated as a terrorist group by the United States.¹⁷⁰ RIM has also been designated as a terrorist entity by the Canadian Department of Public Safety.¹⁷¹

The State Department's SDGT listing is distinct from the Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) listing, the U.S. government's second and more well-known terrorism designation. The two listings are authorized by different acts of Congress and provide different tools for U.S. counterterrorism authorities.

Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) Listing

Section 219 of the Immigration and Nationality Act allows the Secretary of State to designate a group as an FTO based on three criteria: the organization must be foreign, it must engage in terrorist activity or terrorism (or have the ability to do so), and the terrorist activity or terrorism must threaten U.S. national security.¹⁷² When an organization is designated as an FTO, the FBI and Justice Department are able to pursue

¹⁶⁸ Wong, Edward, Julian Barnes, and Eric Schmitt. "Russian Agents Suspected of Directing Far-Right Group to Mail Bombs in Spain." *The New York Times*. January 22, 2023. <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/01/22/us/politics/russia-spain-letter-bombs.html>.

¹⁶⁹ Mosqueda, Sara. "Spanish Authorities Arrest Suspect in Letter Bombs." *Security Management*. ASIS, January 25, 2023. <https://www.asisonline.org/security-management-magazine/latest-news/today-in-security/2023/january/spanish-letter-bomb-suspect-arrested/>.

¹⁷⁰ "United States Designates Russian Imperial Movement and Leaders as Global Terrorists." U.S. Department of State. April 7, 2020. <https://www.state.gov/united-states-designates-russian-imperial-movement-and-leaders-as-global-terrorists/>

¹⁷¹ "Government of Canada lists 13 new groups as terrorist entities and completes review of seven others." Government of Canada. February 3, 2021. <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-safety-canada/news/2021/02/government-of-canada-lists-13-new-groups-as-terrorist-entities-and-completes-review-of-seven-others.html>

¹⁷² "Foreign Terrorist Organizations." U.S. Department of State. 2020. <https://www.state.gov/foreign-terrorist-organizations/>

criminal cases against any individual who provides support to it.¹⁷³ Since September 11, 2001, the material support charge has been the most common terrorism-related penalty levied by the U.S. government and has been applied to cases of terrorist financing, terrorist training, foreign terrorist fighters, and terrorist plots against the United States.¹⁷⁴ No white supremacist or far-right extremist organization has been designated an FTO as of August 2020. The designation has most commonly been applied to jihadist organizations, such as Al Qaeda or the Islamic State.

Specially Designated Global Terrorist (SDGT) Listing

The SDGT designation stems from the President's authority to declare national emergencies under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA), the basis for Executive Order 13224.¹⁷⁵ This executive order allows the Secretary of State or Secretary of the Treasury to designate foreign groups or individuals that have executed, or are at risk of executing, acts of terrorism that threaten U.S. national security as Specially Designated Global Terrorists.¹⁷⁶ Under E.O. 13224, the U.S. government can block the assets of anyone affiliated with SDGTs.¹⁷⁷ As a result, any U.S.-related transactions with a SDGT, such as RIM, will be interdicted.¹⁷⁸ Though the SDGT listing can lead to criminal prosecutions, it is most commonly enforced via civil penalties.¹⁷⁹ RIM is the only white supremacist or far-right extremist group to be designated a SDGT as of August 2020.

In summary, the SDGT designation focuses mainly on the disruption of terrorist groups' financial networks, while the broader FTO designation encompasses any type of material support for a terrorist group. Both apply only to foreign groups and are not mutually exclusive (i.e., the U.S. government can designate a group both as an FTO and SDGT). There is no mechanism for the U.S. government to designate domestic groups as terrorist organizations.

¹⁷³ Lewis, Jon and Mary McCord. "The State Department Should Designate the Russian Imperial Movement as a Foreign Terrorist Organization." Lawfare. April 14, 2020. <https://www.lawfareblog.com/state-department-should-designate-russian-imperial-movement-foreign-terrorist-organization>

¹⁷⁴ Lewis, Jon and Mary McCord. "The State Department Should Designate the Russian Imperial Movement as a Foreign Terrorist Organization." Lawfare. April 14, 2020. <https://www.lawfareblog.com/state-department-should-designate-russian-imperial-movement-foreign-terrorist-organization>

¹⁷⁵ Lewis, Jon and Mary McCord. "The State Department Should Designate the Russian Imperial Movement as a Foreign Terrorist Organization." Lawfare. April 14, 2020. <https://www.lawfareblog.com/state-department-should-designate-russian-imperial-movement-foreign-terrorist-organization>

¹⁷⁶ "Executive Order 13224." U.S. Department of State. 2020. <https://www.state.gov/executive-order-13224/>

¹⁷⁷ "Executive Order 13224." U.S. Department of State. 2020. <https://www.state.gov/executive-order-13224/>

¹⁷⁸ Lewis, Jon and Mary McCord. "The State Department Should Designate the Russian Imperial Movement as a Foreign Terrorist Organization." Lawfare. April 14, 2020. <https://www.lawfareblog.com/state-department-should-designate-russian-imperial-movement-foreign-terrorist-organization>

¹⁷⁹ Lewis, Jon and Mary McCord. "The State Department Should Designate the Russian Imperial Movement as a Foreign Terrorist Organization." Lawfare. April 14, 2020. <https://www.lawfareblog.com/state-department-should-designate-russian-imperial-movement-foreign-terrorist-organization>

B. COMMUNITY RELATIONS

RIM operates relatively openly in Russia. The group is not included in Russia's lists of designated terrorist and extremist groups.¹⁸⁰ The group's training facilities in St. Petersburg are not covert; its Partizan paramilitary instruction course is open to members of the public. *The Washington Post* reported in 2017 that RIM's program appeals to white-collar and self-employed Russian men with a desire to ready themselves for combat amidst the war between Russia and Ukraine.¹⁸¹

RIM leverages social media to gain support from the public both in Russia and abroad. Prior to RIM's April 2020 designation by the U.S. State Department, the group maintained active pages on Facebook and YouTube to disseminate propaganda with the goal of spreading its ideology, defining adversaries, and recruiting new members.¹⁸² Facebook and YouTube shut down RIM's accounts after it was listed as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist by the United States.¹⁸³ RIM, the Imperial Legion, and the Partizan paramilitary training program all maintain pages on the Russian social media platform VKontakte (VK) with more than 30,000 followers.¹⁸⁴

C. RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER GROUPS

RIM has aggressively cultivated ties with other white supremacist and extreme-right groups in Europe and the United States. One of the group's top leadership roles is responsible for managing RIM's relations with peer organizations in Western Europe. RIM largely focuses on expanding its ties to other groups in two significant ways: networking at conferences with other far-right organizations and providing paramilitary training to members of foreign groups at its Partizan camps in St. Petersburg. In 2015, RIM cooperated with the far-right Russian political party Rodina to co-found the World National Conservative Movement, a transnational network of far-right extremist

¹⁸⁰ "Russian Federation Organizations designated as terrorist basing on the court judgements." The Commonwealth of Independent States Anti-Terrorism Center. 2020. <https://www.eng.cisatc.org/1289/134/160/1269>

¹⁸¹ Roth, Andrew. "A right-wing militia trains Russians to fight the next war — with or without Putin." *The Washington Post*. January 2, 2017. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/a-right-wing-militia-trains-russians-to-fight-the-next-war--with-or-without-putin/2017/01/02/f06b5ce8-b71e-11e6-939c-91749443c5e5_story.html

¹⁸² Blazakis, Jason et al. "Inside the Russian Imperial Movement: Practical Implications of U.S. Sanctions." The Soufan Center. April 2020. <https://thesoufancenter.org/research/inside-the-russian-imperial-movement-practical-implications-of-u-s-sanctions/>

¹⁸³ Blazakis, Jason et al. "Inside the Russian Imperial Movement: Practical Implications of U.S. Sanctions." The Soufan Center. April 2020. <https://thesoufancenter.org/research/inside-the-russian-imperial-movement-practical-implications-of-u-s-sanctions/>

¹⁸⁴ "Russian Imperial Movement (RIM)." Counter Extremism Project. 2020. <https://www.counterextremism.com/taxonomy/term/1153>

organizations.¹⁸⁵ This activity suggests that RIM plays a major role in the transnational white supremacist movement.

Relationships with U.S. groups

While RIM has aggressively built ties with European white supremacist groups, its outreach to U.S. organizations appears to historically occurred on a personal – rather than a formal or institutional – basis. As of 2020, this pattern may be changing, given RIM’s alleged relationship with the neo-Nazi group Atomwaffen Division’s Russian affiliate.

RIM’s primary contact within the U.S. white supremacist movement appears to be Matthew Heimbach, founder of the neo-Nazi Traditionalist Workers’ Party (TWP) and an organizer of the August 2017 “Unite the Right” rally in Charlottesville, Virginia. TWP is a neo-Nazi political party that was founded by Heimbach and his wife’s stepfather Matthew Parrott in 2015. The group promotes white supremacy extremism and advocates for the creation of a homeland for white people in the United States. Though TWP does not promote violence, Heimbach and several of its members have brawled with protestors.¹⁸⁶ TWP became defunct in March 2018 after Heimbach was arrested for assault against his wife and father-in-law following an affair with his wife’s stepmother.¹⁸⁷

Heimbach has cited Russia as an inspiration for his organization and praised Russian President Vladimir Putin as the “leader of the free world.”¹⁸⁸ During the September 2017 visit of an RIM delegation to Washington, D.C. and Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, Heimbach hosted RIM leader Stanislav Shevchuk and posed with him for a photo in front of the White House holding an imperial Russian flag.¹⁸⁹ This meeting is reportedly the first between U.S. white supremacists and a Russian far-right organization on U.S. soil.¹⁹⁰ In an interview with liberal news outlet ThinkProgress, Heimbach highlighted similarities in goals shared by his group and RIM. He declared his intention for TWP to represent the U.S. extreme right in dialogues with RIM.¹⁹¹ Heimbach has allegedly received funds

¹⁸⁵ Blazakis, Jason et al. “Inside the Russian Imperial Movement: Practical Implications of U.S. Sanctions.” The Soufan Center. April 2020. <https://thesoufancenter.org/research/inside-the-russian-imperial-movement-practical-implications-of-u-s-sanctions/>

¹⁸⁶ “Traditionalist Worker Party/Traditional Youth Network.” Counter Extremism Project. 2020. <https://www.counterextremism.com/supremacy/traditionalist-worker-partytraditional-youth-network>

¹⁸⁷ “Traditionalist Worker Party/Traditional Youth Network.” Counter Extremism Project. 2020. <https://www.counterextremism.com/supremacy/traditionalist-worker-partytraditional-youth-network>

¹⁸⁸ Blazakis, Jason et al. “Inside the Russian Imperial Movement: Practical Implications of U.S. Sanctions.” The Soufan Center. April 2020. <https://thesoufancenter.org/research/inside-the-russian-imperial-movement-practical-implications-of-u-s-sanctions/>

¹⁸⁹ Sahinkaya, Ezel and Danila Galperovich. “Radical Russian Imperial Movement Expanding Global Outreach.” VOA News. May 9, 2020. <https://www.voanews.com/extremism-watch/radical-russian-imperial-movement-expanding-global-outreach>

¹⁹⁰ Michel, Casey. “Russian, American white nationalists raise their flags in Washington.” ThinkProgress. September 22, 2017. <https://thinkprogress.org/russian-american-nationalists-washington-5bd15fd18eaf/>

¹⁹¹ Michel, Casey. “Russian, American white nationalists raise their flags in Washington.” ThinkProgress. September 22, 2017. <https://thinkprogress.org/russian-american-nationalists-washington-5bd15fd18eaf/>

from RIM and met with the group's representatives in the United States several times.¹⁹² Though he has received invitations to travel to Russia and train with RIM, it is unclear if he or any other members of the TWP have done so.

Though Heimbach and his Traditionalist Workers' Party appear to be at the center of RIM's efforts to expand its U.S. presence, the group has pursued other contacts in the U.S. extreme right. RIM networked with U.S. white supremacists Sam Dickson, a lawyer affiliated with the Ku Klux Klan, and Jared Taylor, editor of the white supremacist publication *American Renaissance*, at the March 2015 International Russian Conservative Forum conference. The group reportedly offered to provide paramilitary training to organizers of the August 2017 "Unite the Right" rally of the extreme right in Charlottesville, Virginia, including Richard Spencer, Jason Kessler, and Eli Mosley. However, both RIM and the U.S. white supremacists deny these reports.¹⁹³ As of June 2020, no U.S. citizens are known to have participated in RIM's paramilitary training.¹⁹⁴

Researcher Mariya Omelicheva of the National War College suggests that RIM's presence in the United States may be limited.¹⁹⁵ Heimbach, seemingly RIM's primary contact in the United States, was arrested in 2018 for assaulting his father-in-law. Heimbach's neo-Nazi group, the Traditionalist Workers' Party, became inactive that same year.¹⁹⁶

In June 2020, the Argentinian news outlet Infobae reported that RIM had forged ties with the Russian affiliate of the U.S. neo-Nazi group Atomwaffen Division (AWD). On May 31, 2020, AWD announced a new branch in Russia and released Russian translations of its ideological texts.¹⁹⁷ The official name of this Russian affiliate is unclear; for ease of reference, this profile has adopted the term "AWD Russia." Advertised on AWD

¹⁹² Blazakis, Jason et al. "Inside the Russian Imperial Movement: Practical Implications of U.S. Sanctions." The Soufan Center. April 2020. <https://thesoufancenter.org/research/inside-the-russian-imperial-movement-practical-implications-of-u-s-sanctions/>

¹⁹³ Omelicheva, Mariya. "Designating the Russian Imperial Movement a Terrorist Organization: A Drop In The Bucket of Needed U.S. Counter-Extremism Responses." PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 653. June 2020. http://www.ponarseurasia.org/sites/default/files/policy-memos-pdf/Pepm653_Omelicheva_Jun2020.pdf?

¹⁹⁴ Hume, Tim. "German Neo Nazis Are Getting Explosives Training at a White Supremacist Camp in Russia." VICE News. June 6, 2020. https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/g5pqk4/german-neo-nazis-are-getting-explosives-training-at-a-white-supremacist-camp-in-russia

¹⁹⁵ Omelicheva, Mariya. "Designating the Russian Imperial Movement a Terrorist Organization: A Drop In The Bucket of Needed U.S. Counter-Extremism Responses." PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 653. June 2020. http://www.ponarseurasia.org/sites/default/files/policy-memos-pdf/Pepm653_Omelicheva_Jun2020.pdf?

¹⁹⁶ Omelicheva, Mariya. "Designating the Russian Imperial Movement a Terrorist Organization: A Drop In The Bucket of Needed U.S. Counter-Extremism Responses." PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 653. June 2020. http://www.ponarseurasia.org/sites/default/files/policy-memos-pdf/Pepm653_Omelicheva_Jun2020.pdf?

¹⁹⁷ Mekhennet, Souad and Rachel Weiner. "As Trump vows crackdown on 'antifa,' growth of right-wing extremism frustrates Europeans." *The Washington Post*. June 5, 2020. https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/as-trump-vows-crackdown-on-antifa-growth-of-right-wing-extremism-frustrates-europeans/2020/06/05/7006eb40-9b94-11ea-ad09-8da7ec214672_story.html

Germany's Telegram channel, AWD Russia also maintains a page on the Russian social networking platform VK and solicits applications from prospective members.¹⁹⁸ According to Infobae, an unknown number of AWD Russia members have received training from RIM's Partizan paramilitary course.¹⁹⁹ As of July 2020, this reporting has not been independently confirmed.

U.S. extreme-right groups invited to RIM and Rodina's World National Conservative Movement in 2015 include the following:

- American Freedom Party
- American Renaissance
- League of the South
- Traditionalist Youth Network²⁰⁰

Relationships with European groups

The Azov Movement – one of the most well-known extreme-right groups in Ukraine and formally a part of that country's national guard – is an adversary of RIM in the Ukrainian conflict.²⁰¹ Azov recruits foreign fighters on the basis of its white supremacist and neo-Nazi ideology to fight against pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine. In 2014 and 2015, RIM's paramilitary force fought alongside the separatists. Though Azov and RIM share some white supremacy extremist beliefs, they have fought on opposite sides in Ukraine's civil war.

The Free Russia Legion is a unit formed by Russian citizens who traveled to Ukraine to fight against Russian forces there. At least one former RIM member joined this group and is now fighting against the Russian invasion. Members go through extensive screening to protect the unit from infiltration of Russian spies. The legion trained near Kyiv and operates under the umbrella of the Ukrainian International Legion which includes foreign fighters from all over the world.²⁰²

¹⁹⁸ "Extremist Content Online: Extremists Continue Exploiting U.S. Protests & Civil Unrest on Telegram." Counter Extremism Project. June 8, 2020. <https://www.counterextremism.com/press/extremist-content-online-extremists-continue-exploiting-us-protests-civil-unrest-telegram>

¹⁹⁹ Sierra, Gustavo. "Club Partizan, el campo de entrenamiento militar en Rusia para los neonazis del mundo." Infobae. 14 June 2020. <https://www.infobae.com/america/mundo/2020/06/14/club-partizan-el-campo-de-entrenamiento-militar-ruso-para-los-neonazis-del-mundo/>

²⁰⁰ Blazakis, Jason et al. "Inside the Russian Imperial Movement: Practical Implications of U.S. Sanctions." The Soufan Center. April 2020. <https://thesoufancenter.org/research/inside-the-russian-imperial-movement-practical-implications-of-u-s-sanctions/>

²⁰¹ Blazakis, Jason et al. "Inside the Russian Imperial Movement: Practical Implications of U.S. Sanctions." The Soufan Center. April 2020. <https://thesoufancenter.org/research/inside-the-russian-imperial-movement-practical-implications-of-u-s-sanctions/>

²⁰² Schwirtz, Michael. "They Are Russians Fighting Against Their Homeland. Here's Why." *The New York Times*. February 12, 2023. https://www.nytimes.com/2023/02/12/world/europe/russian-legion-ukraine-war.html?unlocked_article_code=mN-0DAm5cAymp_WUVIx0Cow5CPE183S1_3IN87cT3Q5a0B2DvBLfF4M5qz76QnzMb3zX16SyRindKanal0rhZXHBoYCi_FA6LLI7tujDwXgYFglpBVvQ2LgEYEiURroXGBn-_zRpkz4Jj72-

RIM has pursued ties with German neo-Nazi groups, particularly the National Democratic Party (NPD), an illiberal, anti-Semitic, white supremacist political party. Founded in 1964, the NPD remained marginal in German politics until it began attracting more support in the 2010s.²⁰³ Though the NPD officially disavows violence, gangs have committed acts of violence in the party's name.²⁰⁴ The German government has sought to ban the NPD three times (in 2003, 2013, and 2016), but it remains active.²⁰⁵ The NPD campaigns for offices in state, federal, and European Parliament elections. However, the party has consistently received low vote shares as it has been forced to compete with the Alternative for Germany (AfD) party.²⁰⁶ Between 2014 and 2019, former NPD leader Udo Voigt held a seat in the European Parliament, though he lost it in the 2019 election.²⁰⁷ As of 2019, the NPD had 3,600 members, down from 4,000 members the year before.²⁰⁸ Both RIM and the NPD attended the International Russian Conservative Forum conference hosted by far-right Russian political party Rodina in March 2015.²⁰⁹ In June 2015, RIM invited the NPD to join its World National Conservative Movement.²¹⁰ According to the German government, RIM provided firearms and explosives training to members of the youth wing of the NPD in 2020 though Partizan.²¹¹

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²⁰³ "National Democratic Party of Germany." Counter Extremism Project. 2020.

<https://www.counterextremism.com/threat/national-democratic-party-germany>

²⁰⁴ "National Democratic Party of Germany." Counter Extremism Project. 2020.

<https://www.counterextremism.com/threat/national-democratic-party-germany>

²⁰⁵ "National Democratic Party of Germany." Counter Extremism Project. 2020.

<https://www.counterextremism.com/threat/national-democratic-party-germany>

²⁰⁶ "Brief Summary 2019 Report on the Protection of the Constitution: Facts and Trends." German Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building, and Community. 2020. <https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/embed/annual-report-2019-summary.pdf>

²⁰⁷ "Brief Summary 2019 Report on the Protection of the Constitution: Facts and Trends." German Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building, and Community. 2020. <https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/embed/annual-report-2019-summary.pdf>

²⁰⁸ "Brief Summary 2019 Report on the Protection of the Constitution: Facts and Trends." German Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building, and Community. 2020. <https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/embed/annual-report-2019-summary.pdf>

²⁰⁹ Blazakis, Jason et al. "Inside the Russian Imperial Movement: Practical Implications of U.S. Sanctions." The Soufan Center. April 2020. <https://thesoufancenter.org/research/inside-the-russian-imperial-movement-practical-implications-of-u-s-sanctions/>

²¹⁰ "Russian Imperial Movement (RIM)." Counter Extremism Project. 2020. <https://www.counterextremism.com/taxonomy/term/1153>. Blazakis, Jason et al. "Inside the Russian Imperial Movement: Practical Implications of U.S. Sanctions." The Soufan Center. April 2020. <https://thesoufancenter.org/research/inside-the-russian-imperial-movement-practical-implications-of-u-s-sanctions/>

²¹¹ Hume, Tim. "German Neo Nazis Are Getting Explosives Training at a White Supremacist Camp in Russia." VICE News. June 6, 2020. https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/g5pqk4/german-neo-nazis-are-getting-explosives-training-at-a-white-supremacist-camp-in-russia

RIM has also furthered a relationship with the Third Path (“Der III. Weg” in German, also translated as the “Third Way”). The Third Path is a German extreme-right, anti-Semitic political party. Like the NPD, the Third Path engages in political activities but has seen little electoral success.²¹² Members of the Third Path have conducted patrols of neighborhoods, ostensibly to protect communities against “criminal foreigners.” The group has also organized collections of food and winter clothing to support exclusively ethnic Germans.²¹³ In 2019, the Third Path boasted 580 members, up from 530 in 2018.²¹⁴ Along with the NPD, members of the Third Path also received firearms and explosives training from RIM in 2020.²¹⁵

RIM has also cooperated closely with the Nordic Resistance Movement (NRM), a Swedish-based neo-Nazi organization that seeks to merge all Scandinavian countries into a single nationalist-socialist state. Founded in 1997, the group boasts 250-300 members as of 2017 and has active chapters in Sweden, Finland, and Norway with supporters in Iceland and Denmark.²¹⁶ The Trump administration’s 2018 National Counterterrorism Strategy cited NRM as an example of a white supremacist armed group that poses a threat to the United States.²¹⁷ NRM’s leader, Simon Lindberg, stated in August 2017 that his group “sees [RIM] as friends.”²¹⁸ RIM leader Vorobyev spoke at the NRM’s “Nordic Days” event in 2015, where he railed against Jews and so-called threats to Western civilization.²¹⁹ RIM has reportedly given NRM advice on attracting more widespread support by establishing a political party. RIM also provided NRM with funds, though Vorobyev claims that this financial support only amounted to \$150.²²⁰ RIM invited NRM

²¹² “Brief Summary 2019 Report on the Protection of the Constitution: Facts and Trends.” German Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building, and Community. 2020. <https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/embed/annual-report-2019-summary.pdf>

²¹³ “Brief Summary 2019 Report on the Protection of the Constitution: Facts and Trends.” German Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building, and Community. 2020. <https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/embed/annual-report-2019-summary.pdf>

²¹⁴ “Brief Summary 2019 Report on the Protection of the Constitution: Facts and Trends.” German Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building, and Community. 2020. <https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/embed/annual-report-2019-summary.pdf>

²¹⁵ Hume, Tim. “German Neo Nazis Are Getting Explosives Training at a White Supremacist Camp in Russia.” VICE News. June 6, 2020. https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/g5pqk4/german-neo-nazis-are-getting-explosives-training-at-a-white-supremacist-camp-in-russia

²¹⁶ “Nordic Resistance Movement (NRM).” Counter Extremism Project. 2020. <https://www.counterextremism.com/taxonomy/term/674>

²¹⁷ “National Strategy for Counterterrorism of the United States of America.” Administration of Donald J. Trump. October 2018. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/NSCT.pdf>

²¹⁸ Huetlin, Josephine. “Russian Extremists Are Training Right-Wing Terrorists From Western Europe.” *The Daily Beast*. August 2, 2017. <https://www.thedailybeast.com/russian-extremists-are-training-right-wing-terrorists-from-western-europe?ref=scroll>

²¹⁹ “Neo-Nazis in the North: The Nordic Resistance Movement in Finland, Sweden and Norway.” Hate Speech International. N.d. <https://www.hate-speech.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/neo-nazis-in-the-north.pdf>

²²⁰ Huetlin, Josephine. “Russian Extremists Are Training Right-Wing Terrorists From Western Europe.” *The Daily Beast*. August 2, 2017. <https://www.thedailybeast.com/russian-extremists-are-training-right-wing-terrorists-from-western-europe?ref=scroll>. “Russian Imperial Movement (RIM).” Counter Extremism Project. 2020. <https://www.counterextremism.com/taxonomy/term/1153>

to take part in its World National Conservative Movement umbrella association in 2015.²²¹

Most notably, RIM provided training to two members of NRM who committed three terrorist attacks in Sweden in late 2016 and early 2017. Anton Thulin and Viktor Melin enrolled in the Partizan program in August 2016 and spent 11 days learning combat skills from RIM.²²² Between November 2016 and January 2017, the men and an unaffiliated accomplice bombed a left-wing bookstore-café, a refugee shelter, and a campground housing asylum seekers.²²³ One victim was injured.²²⁴ U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo cited the attacks as a justification for RIM's terrorist designation.²²⁵ In addition to training, RIM has provided NRM with weapons; in January 2020, Swedish authorities arrested a Russian-born individual who was reportedly trafficking firearms from RIM to NRM.²²⁶

European extreme-right groups invited to RIM and Rodina's World National Conservative Movement in 2015 include the following:

- Euro-Russia Nation (Belgium)
- Bulgarski Nacionalen Sojuz (Bulgaria)
- National Popular Front, also known as ELAM (Cyprus)
- Generace Identity (Czech Republic)
- Dělnická strana sociální spravedlnosti, also known as DSSS (Czech Republic)
- Národní demokracie (Czech Republic)
- Danskernes Parti (Denmark)
- Kansallinen Vastarinta (Finland)
- Perussuomalaiset (Finland)
- Suomen Sisu (Finland)
- Die Russlanddeutschen Konservativen (Germany)
- National Democratic Party (Germany)
- Jobbik (Hungary)
- Forza Nuova (Italy)
- Millenium (Italy)

²²¹ Blazakis, Jason et al. "Inside the Russian Imperial Movement: Practical Implications of U.S. Sanctions." The Soufan Center. April 2020. <https://thesoufancenter.org/research/inside-the-russian-imperial-movement-practical-implications-of-u-s-sanctions/>

²²² Blazakis, Jason et al. "Inside the Russian Imperial Movement: Practical Implications of U.S. Sanctions." The Soufan Center. April 2020. <https://thesoufancenter.org/research/inside-the-russian-imperial-movement-practical-implications-of-u-s-sanctions/>

²²³ Blazakis, Jason et al. "Inside the Russian Imperial Movement: Practical Implications of U.S. Sanctions." The Soufan Center. April 2020. <https://thesoufancenter.org/research/inside-the-russian-imperial-movement-practical-implications-of-u-s-sanctions/>

²²⁴ "GTD: Global Terrorism Database." University of Maryland. 2019. <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/>

²²⁵ "United States Designates Russian Imperial Movement and Leaders as Global Terrorists." U.S. Department of State. April 7, 2020. <https://www.state.gov/united-states-designates-russian-imperial-movement-and-leaders-as-global-terrorists/>

²²⁶ Ross, Alexander Reid. "America's neo-Nazi Terrorists Have a Powerful New Patron: Vladimir Putin." Haaretz. February 2, 2020. <https://www.haaretz.com/us-news/.premium-america-s-neo-nazi-terrorists-have-a-powerful-new-patron-vladimir-putin-1.8471461>

- Mișcarea Conservatoare (Moldova)
- Mișcarea Națională (Moldova)
- Błękitna Polska (Poland)
- Falanga (Poland)
- Kongres Nowej Prawicy (Poland)
- Konwent Narodowy Polski (Poland)
- Młodzież Wszechpolska (Poland)
- Ruch Narodowy (Poland)
- Noua Dreaptă (Romania)
- Comunión Tradicionalista (Spain)
- Democracia Nacional (Spain)
- Nordisk Ungdom (Sweden)
- Nordic Resistance Movement (Sweden)
- Svesnkarnas parti (Sweden)
- Svenska motståndsrörelsens (Sweden)
- Network Carpatho-Russian movement (Ukraine)²²⁷

Relationships with Russian groups

In the late 2000s and early 2010s, RIM frequently networked with domestic Russian far-right organizations. The group joined several umbrella associations as part of a bid to maximize the power of the far-right movement in Russia. RIM avidly cultivated ties with peer organizations until a 2014 schism over Russia’s annexation of Crimea and support for separatists in Eastern Ukraine fractured the Russian far right.

In late 2014, RIM joined a coalition of Russian-far right groups named the Russian National Front. As of 2020, this umbrella includes other ultra-nationalist organizations such as the Great Russia Party, the People's Militia in the Name of Minin and Pozharsky (NOMP), the Movement For Nationalization and De-Privatization of Strategic Resources of the Country, the Initiative Group for the Referendum “For a Responsible Power” (IGPR “ZOV”), the Russian People’s Council, the Union of Orthodox Banner Bearers, and the Black Hundred.²²⁸ The Russian National Front promoted ethnic Russian nationalism, including but not limited to supporting the “Novorossiya” project in Ukraine.

RIM adopted a strategic approach to building relationships across the Russian far right. In the early 2010s, a rivalry between the Movement against Illegal Immigration (DPNI) and the Russian Social Movement (ROD) made it difficult to consolidate the Russian far right into a cohesive whole. This rivalry ultimately resulted in the establishment of two parallel

²²⁷ Blazakis, Jason et al. “Inside the Russian Imperial Movement: Practical Implications of U.S. Sanctions.” The Soufan Center. April 2020. <https://thesoufancenter.org/research/inside-the-russian-imperial-movement-practical-implications-of-u-s-sanctions/>

²²⁸ Yudina, Natalia and Vera Alperovich. “Calm Before the Storm? Xenophobia and Radical Nationalism in Russia, and Efforts to Counteract Them in 2014.” SOVA Center for Information and Analysis. April 21, 2015. <https://www.sova-center.ru/en/xenophobia/reports-analyses/2015/04/d31818/>

umbrella associations.²²⁹ DPNI formed the “Russians Ethno-Political Association (REPA, known as the “Russians”) in April 2011.²³⁰ REPA’s leadership positions are distributed among the constituent organizations, which included RIM, DPNI, the National Socialist Initiative (NSI), the Slavic Force (SS), the Union of the Russian People (SRN), the National Democratic Party (NDP), and the Memory Russian Liberation Front.²³¹ RIM quit REPA in September 2014 when the umbrella’s leadership largely opposed the pro-Russian separatist movement in Ukraine, which RIM had supported.²³² REPA essentially disintegrated not long after RIM left the group.²³³

RIM joined the rival umbrella, ROD’s Russian Platform (RP) the same year that it joined REPA. In September 2011, ROD founded RP and welcomed RIM, NSI, the Russian Citizens Union, and the Moscow Defense League, among other smaller organizations.²³⁴

In addition to the rivalry between DPNI and ROD over leadership of the far-right movement, the dueling umbrella associations also clashed over ideology. REPA was reportedly more extremist and partially neo-Nazi in its membership. RP presented a more moderate face, though it did not rule out the use of violence.²³⁵ Like REPA, RP reportedly ceased to operate by 2015.²³⁶

RIM has indirect ties to the Wagner Group through Task Force Rusich, a far right paramilitary group operating in Ukraine. Rusich is widely considered to be subordinate to Wagner, and operate semi-independently but within the chain of command of Wagner’s

²²⁹ Yudina, Natalia and Vera Alperovich. “Spring 2011: Causes Célèbres and New Ultra-right Formations.” SOVA Center for Information and Analysis. July 12, 2011. <https://www.sova-center.ru/en/xenophobia/reports-analyses/2011/07/d22101/>

²³⁰ Yudina, Natalia and Vera Alperovich. “Spring 2011: Causes Célèbres and New Ultra-right Formations.” SOVA Center for Information and Analysis. July 12, 2011. <https://www.sova-center.ru/en/xenophobia/reports-analyses/2011/07/d22101/>

²³¹ Yudina, Natalia and Vera Alperovich. “Spring 2011: Causes Célèbres and New Ultra-right Formations.” SOVA Center for Information and Analysis. July 12, 2011. <https://www.sova-center.ru/en/xenophobia/reports-analyses/2011/07/d22101/>

²³² Yudina, Natalia and Vera Alperovich. “Calm Before the Storm? Xenophobia and Radical Nationalism in Russia, and Efforts to Counteract Them in 2014. SOVA Center for Information and Analysis. April 21, 2015. <https://www.sova-center.ru/en/xenophobia/reports-analyses/2015/04/d31818/>

²³³ Yudina, Natalia and Vera Alperovich. “Calm Before the Storm? Xenophobia and Radical Nationalism in Russia, and Efforts to Counteract Them in 2014. SOVA Center for Information and Analysis. April 21, 2015. <https://www.sova-center.ru/en/xenophobia/reports-analyses/2015/04/d31818/>

²³⁴ Yudina, Natalia and Vera Alperovich. “Autumn 2011: The Ultra-right’s Pre-Election Maneuvers.” SOVA Center for Information and Analysis. February 14, 2012. <https://www.sova-center.ru/en/xenophobia/reports-analyses/2012/02/d23665/>

²³⁵ Yudina, Natalia, Vera Alperovich, and Alexander Verkhovsky. “Between Manezhnaya and Bolotnaya: Xenophobia and Radical Nationalism in Russia, and Efforts to Counteract Them in 2011.” SOVA Center for Information and Analysis. April 5, 2012. <https://www.sova-center.ru/en/xenophobia/reports-analyses/2012/04/d24088/>

²³⁶ Verkhovsky, Alexander. “Radical nationalists from the start of Medvedev’s presidency to the war in Donbas: True till death?” in *The New Russian Nationalism*, Edinburgh University Press, 2015. 75-103. <https://library.oapen.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.12657/30059/650041.pdf?sequence=1#page=96>

leadership. Members of Task Force Rusich previously fought alongside Wagner in Syria, and in the Donbas in eastern Ukraine in 2014 and 2015. The founders of Task Force Rusich, Aleksey Milchakov and Jan Petrovksy, both went through the Partizan training center run by RIM.²³⁷ Additionally, RIM fighters were killed in action in Libya while fighting on behalf of Khalifa Haftar.²³⁸ Haftar is supported by the Wagner group as well, but exact ties between the RIM fighters present in Libya and Wagner's operational presence is not exactly known.

Relationships with groups outside the United States and Europe

Though RIM has invested more heavily in its relations with U.S. and European white supremacist organizations, it has established contacts with groups outside these regions. RIM invited over 50 groups from 28 countries to its World National Conservative Movement in 2015, including the following:

- Acción Identitaria (Chile)
- Dayar Mongol (Mongolia)
- Issuy-Kai (Japan)
- Front Nasionaal (South Africa)
- National Alliance for Democracy (Thailand)
- New Political Party (Thailand)
- Syrian Social Nationalist Party (Syria)²³⁹

Relationships with separatists in Ukraine

RIM has close ties to pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine, with whom it has fought against Ukrainian government forces. Leaders of the group travelled to Ukraine to meet with separatists in spring 2014 as the conflict in the country broke out. RIM began sending foreign fighters to support the separatists later that year.²⁴⁰ The group has also trained separatists through its Partizan program.²⁴¹ Igor Gorkin, a former Russian intelligence officer and military leader in the separatist Ukrainian region of Donetsk, congratulated RIM on its U.S. terrorist designation in April 2020.²⁴²

²³⁷ Downing, Sarah. "The Wagner Group: Paramilitary Terrorism." FDD. Foundation for Defense of Democracies, October 12, 2022. <https://www.fdd.org/analysis/2022/09/29/wagner-group-paramilitary-terrorism/>.

²³⁸ "Russian mercenary who fought in Donbas killed in Libya." UAWire. January 30, 2020. <https://uawire.org/russian-mercenary-who-fought-in-donbas-killed-in-libya>

²³⁹ Blazakis, Jason et al. "Inside the Russian Imperial Movement: Practical Implications of U.S. Sanctions." The Soufan Center. April 2020. <https://thesoufancenter.org/research/inside-the-russian-imperial-movement-practical-implications-of-u-s-sanctions/>

²⁴⁰ "Russian Imperial Movement (RIM)." Counter Extremism Project. 2020. <https://www.counterextremism.com/taxonomy/term/1153>.

²⁴¹ Furlong, Ray. "The Gun-Toting Tsarists Washington Calls Terrorists." RadioFreeEurope/RadioFree Liberty. Video. April 26, 2020. <https://www.rferl.org/a/the-gun-toting-tsarists-washington-calls-terrorists/30574960.html>

²⁴² Dixon, Robyn. "Inside White-Supremacist Russian Imperial Movement, Designated Foreign Terrorist Organization by U.S. State Department." *The Washington Post*. April 13, 2020. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/russia-white-supremacist-terrorism->

D. STATE SPONSORS AND EXTERNAL INFLUENCES

The Kremlin has tolerated RIM when the group's activities further its own interests, though no evidence suggests that the Kremlin formally supports the group.²⁴³ Michael Carpenter, a former official in the U.S. Department of Defense, has characterized the Moscow-RIM relationship as one of "adversarial symbiosis."²⁴⁴ RIM opposes the regime of Russian President Vladimir Putin.²⁴⁵ Prior to the war in Ukraine, the RIM's hostility to Putin's regime prompted police raids on its facilities; these raids ebbed when the group decreased its focus on Russian domestic politics and turned its attention to Ukraine.²⁴⁶ In 2014, RIM began fighting alongside pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine.²⁴⁷ In 2016, a member of the Imperial Legion interviewed by the BBC described the Moscow-RIM relationship: "we don't receive any support, but at the same time, we aren't hampered [by the Russian government]."²⁴⁸ Currently, RIM and its paramilitary training program operates openly in Russia.²⁴⁹

[us/2020/04/11/255a9762-7a75-11ea-a311-adb1344719a9_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/russia-white-supremacist-terrorism-us/2020/04/11/255a9762-7a75-11ea-a311-adb1344719a9_story.html); D'Alessio, Federico Alistair. "Do Not Believe Putin's Propaganda, There Are Far More Neo-Nazis among the pro-Russians." *Small Wars Journal*. Small Wars Journal, June 14, 2022. <https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/do-not-believe-putins-propaganda-there-are-far-more-neo-nazis-among-pro-russians>; - Rondeaux, Candace, and Ben Dalton. "Putin's Stealth Mobilization: Russian Irregulars and the Wagner Group's Shadow Command Structure." *New America*. New America, February 22, 2023. <https://www.newamerica.org/future-frontlines/reports/putin-mobilization-wagner-group/>.

²⁴³ Gramer, Robbie and Amy MacKinnon. "In Historic First, U.S. Labels Russian White Supremacists a Terrorist Group." *Foreign Policy*. April 6, 2020. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/04/06/in-historic-first-u-s-labels-russian-white-supremacists-a-terrorist-group/>

²⁴⁴ Gramer, Robbie and Amy MacKinnon. "In Historic First, U.S. Labels Russian White Supremacists a Terrorist Group." *Foreign Policy*. April 6, 2020. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/04/06/in-historic-first-u-s-labels-russian-white-supremacists-a-terrorist-group/>

²⁴⁵ Roth, Andrew. "A right-wing militia trains Russians to fight the next war — with or without Putin." *The Washington Post*. January 2, 2017. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/a-right-wing-militia-trains-russians-to-fight-the-next-war--with-or-without-putin/2017/01/02/f06b5ce8-b71e-11e6-939c-91749443c5e5_story.html

²⁴⁶ Roth, Andrew. "A right-wing militia trains Russians to fight the next war — with or without Putin." *The Washington Post*. January 2, 2017. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/a-right-wing-militia-trains-russians-to-fight-the-next-war--with-or-without-putin/2017/01/02/f06b5ce8-b71e-11e6-939c-91749443c5e5_story.html

²⁴⁷ Dixon, Robyn. "Inside White-Supremacist Russian Imperial Movement, Designated Foreign Terrorist Organization by U.S. State Department." *The Washington Post*. April 13, 2020. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/russia-white-supremacist-terrorism-us/2020/04/11/255a9762-7a75-11ea-a311-adb1344719a9_story.html

²⁴⁸ Roth, Andrew. "A right-wing militia trains Russians to fight the next war — with or without Putin." *The Washington Post*. January 2, 2017. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/a-right-wing-militia-trains-russians-to-fight-the-next-war--with-or-without-putin/2017/01/02/f06b5ce8-b71e-11e6-939c-91749443c5e5_story.html

²⁴⁹ Carpenter, Michael. "Russia Is Co-opting Angry Young Men." *The Atlantic*. August 29, 2018. <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2018/08/russia-is-co-opting-angry-young-men/568741/>

Moscow has protested the April 2020 listing of the RIM as Specially Designated Global Terrorists by the U.S. State Department.²⁵⁰ For example, the Office of the Russian Prosecutor General has claimed that RIM's activities are limited to Russian Orthodox religious festivals.²⁵¹ Nevertheless, Russia has previously recognized RIM as an extremist group; its website and several of its publications have been listed as "extremist material" by the Russian Ministry of Justice since 2012.²⁵²

Analysts have noted that RIM's activities advance Moscow's goals in two major respects: supporting Russian-backed separatists in Ukraine and seeking to fuel white supremacist extremism in Europe and the United States.²⁵³ This latter effort serves to undermine Western liberal democracy, a key goal of the Kremlin.²⁵⁴

MAPS

- Global Right-Wing Extremism

²⁵⁰ Sahinkaya, Ezel and Danila Galperovich. "Radical Russian Imperial Movement Expanding Global Outreach." VOA News. May 9, 2020. <https://www.voanews.com/extremism-watch/radical-russian-imperial-movement-expanding-global-outreach>

²⁵¹ "Russian prosecutors deny 'terrorist' links of Russian Imperial Movement." *BBC Monitoring Former Soviet Union - Political*, April 22, 2020. advance-lexis-com.stanford.idm.oclc.org/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5YR5-78T1-JC8S-C00Y-00000-00&context=1516831. Accessed July 14, 2020.

²⁵² "Russian Imperial Movement's website declared extremist in Russia as far back as 2012." *Russia & CIS General Newswire*, April 6, 2020. advance-lexis-com.stanford.idm.oclc.org/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5YKT-BB81-JC92-P0XV-00000-00&context=1516831. Accessed July 14, 2020.

²⁵³ Arsenault, Elizabeth Grimm and Joseph Stabile. "Confronting Russia's Role in Transnational White Supremacist Extremism." Just Security. February 6, 2020. <https://www.justsecurity.org/68420/confronting-russias-role-in-transnational-white-supremacist-extremism/>

²⁵⁴ Arsenault, Elizabeth Grimm and Joseph Stabile. "Confronting Russia's Role in Transnational White Supremacist Extremism." Just Security. February 6, 2020. <https://www.justsecurity.org/68420/confronting-russias-role-in-transnational-white-supremacist-extremism/>