

Wisconsin shooting reveals connections between US military and fascist groups

By Eric London
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A critical element, which has been virtually ignored in all the media coverage of last Sunday's massacre at the Sikh Temple of Wisconsin is the close connections between the US Armed Forces and various fascist and white supremacist organizations. Wade Michael Page, a neo-Nazi and former US Army service member, murdered six people and critically wounded three others August 5 before reportedly turning the gun on himself after being shot by police.

US Armed Forces recruiters, officers and high-ranking executive branch officials have quietly provided fascist organizations with opportunities to recruit soldiers into the ranks of the National Socialist Movement, Hammerskins, White Military Men and National Alliance.

Page, a self-described member of the Hammerskins, first began to actively sympathize with neo-Nazism during his time in the US military, which lasted from 1992 to 1998. Afterwards, Page made his fascist sympathies clear in hundreds of posts on various neo-Nazi websites and also attempted to purchase goods from the National Alliance in 2000. Both the Hammerskins and the National Alliance advocate a genocidal "racial holy war" and the establishment of a government modeled on Hitler's Nazi regime.

"He really started to identify with neo-Nazism during his time in the military," said University of Nebraska criminologist Pete Simi, who met Page during a 2001 study on white power groups. "And specifically, what he told me at one point was that, if you join the military and you're not a racist, then you certainly will be by the time you leave."

The Hammerskins, National Alliance, and a variety of other neo-Nazi groups were continuously involved in recruitment efforts at numerous Armed Forces bases across the US during the time of Page's military service, according to reports by the FBI and the Southern Poverty

Law Center. The findings point to especially high levels of fascist activity at Fort Bragg Army Base in North Carolina, where Page was stationed between 1995 and 1998.

Around the time that Page arrived in Fort Bragg, three neo-Nazi members of the 82nd Airborne Division were arrested for the murder of a black couple in nearby Fayetteville. A subsequent investigation uncovered nearly two-dozen soldiers with connections to neo-Nazis at Fort Bragg.

In 1992, a group of Fort Bragg soldiers organized a white supremacy paramilitary cell called the Special Forces Underground, which was affiliated with the National Alliance. Over a decade later, a neo-Nazi intelligence officer stationed in Iraq was caught attempting to mail weapons back to the United States. In 2006, the Southern Poverty Law Center discovered online groups of neo-Nazis made up of Fort Bragg soldiers.

Currently, "outside every major military installation, you will have at least two or three active neo-Nazi organizations actively trying to recruit on-duty personnel," explained TJ Leyden, a former neo-Nazi told the Christian Science Monitor.

Fascists "stretch across all branches of [military] service, they are linking up across the branches once they're inside, and they are hard-core," former Defense Department gang detective Scott Barfield told the SPLC in 2006, adding: "there's plenty of evidence we're talking numbers well into the thousands, just in the Army."

Furthermore, "White supremacists have a natural attraction to the army," says the *Military Law Review*, the Armed Forces main legal journal. "They often see themselves as warriors, superbly fit and well-trained in survivalist techniques and weapons and poised for the ultimate conflict with various races."

As Jacob Berg, an active service soldier in Iraq and a

member of the fascist Blood & Honour group, explained to *Salon* journalist Matt Kennard, “There are actually a lot more ‘skinheads,’ ‘Nazis,’ white supremacists now [in the military] than there has been in a long time.” Berg wrote in an E-mail exchange with Kennard, “Us racists are actually getting into the military a lot now because if we don’t every one who already is [in the military] will take pity on killing sand niggers.... I’m so proud of my kills [because] by killing a brown [person] many white people will live to see a new dawn.”

It is apparent that layers within the military value right-wing nationalist groups for adding to the culture of violence and genocide that coincides with the aims of the US military in its neo-colonial wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. With the lies about the “war on terror” in shatters—as the US allies itself with al Qaeda in Libya and Syria to achieve its geo-political aims—the American government and military must increasingly rely on the most reactionary ideological views to justify its imperialist wars, occupations and brutal subjugation of foreign populations.

Officers and administration officials either directly or tacitly support the recruitment of fascists. “Recruiters are knowingly allowing neo-Nazis and white supremacists to join the armed forces, and commanders don’t remove them... even after we positively identify them as extremists or gang members,” says former Defense Department detective Barfield.

TJ Leyden explained that officers often are ambivalent to open support for fascism within the Armed Forces. Leyden recalls that when he hung a Nazi flag in his barracks, “the only thing my commander would say was, ‘Hey, can you do me a favor? Can you take that flag down when the CG [commanding general] comes through?’”

In fact, the recruitment of open members of fascist groups is government policy. In response to declining enlistment numbers after the invasion of Iraq, the Bush administration removed gang-activity barriers to enlistment in 2005. Since the government does not make qualitative distinctions between fascist groups and street gangs, the decision amounted to an open-door policy for neo-Nazis.

The Obama Administration has upheld this policy decision. Kennard of *Salon* told *Russia Today* in June, 2010, that “the regulations that were changed during the war on terror haven’t been changed back. They still have the same legal framework or the same recruitment framework.”

Tom Metzger, a former grand wizard of the Ku Klux Klan and current leader of the White Aryan Resistance, told *Salon* that the military was more tolerant of fascists. “Now they are letting everybody in,” Metzger said.

Forrest Fogarty, a neo-Nazi veteran of the Iraq War, told *Salon* in 2008 that the Army was well aware of his involvement with fascist groups but did nothing to punish him. When Fogarty’s ex-girlfriend mailed the Armed Forces a file of photographs showing him at fascist rallies and performing in a Nazi band, Fogarty explained that, “they hauled me before some sort of committee and showed me the pictures... They knew what I was about. But they let it go because I’m a great soldier.”

In 2005 after being honorably discharged, Fogarty was asked to reenlist.

US Armed Forces officers had a similar response when a photograph showing the I Marine Expeditionary Force in Afghanistan posing with the SS flag surfaced in early 2012. Local commanders had been aware of the photos for months and refused to discipline the soldiers outside of asking them to avoid further photographing sessions with the SS flag.

A military probe claimed that the photograph was not an homage to Hitler’s SS and was only meant to harmlessly identify the marines with the letters SS for “scout snipers”.

These facts provide ample evidence of the incestuous relationship between the US military and fascist organizations. As the murders in Wisconsin and previous experiences such as the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing show, the US military—with the tacit or open blessing of the Pentagon brass and representatives of both political parties—has become the incubator of the most politically reactionary elements. Under conditions of growing class struggle in America, such right-wing forces pose an enormous threat not only to those facing US wars and occupations but workers and young people in the US itself.

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