

Atomwaffen Division

Atomwaffen Division is a militant neo-Nazi group in the U.S.
Who is behind it?

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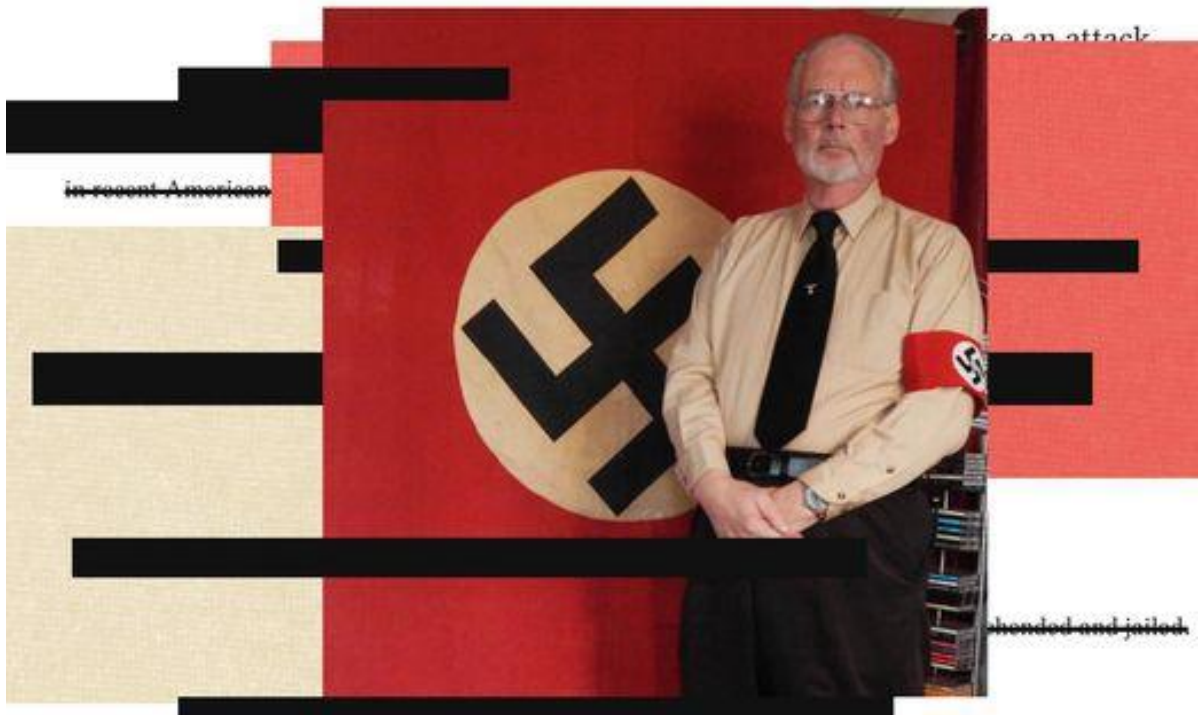
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It's like a different world. The fenced-in apartment complex in the heart of Denver is located just a short walk from glitzy boutiques and high-end restaurants, but there is no sign of prosperity here. Homeless people are camped nearby while addicts smoke crack in the parking lot.

People are socializing in front of the building's entrance despite the midday heat. A black man is pacing the fence trying to get someone's attention while two younger men are carrying furniture into a neighboring building. It's a convivial neighborhood and everyone seems to know everyone else. Everyone, that is, except the older, gray-haired man who walks up to the door with a shopping bag full of vegetables at around 4 p.m. He doesn't even look at his neighbors before disappearing into the complex without greeting any of them.

But once you've seen the photos from the inside of his apartment, it immediately becomes clear why the 66-year-old seeks to limit his contact with the outside world. And it becomes even more clear when you look into his past.



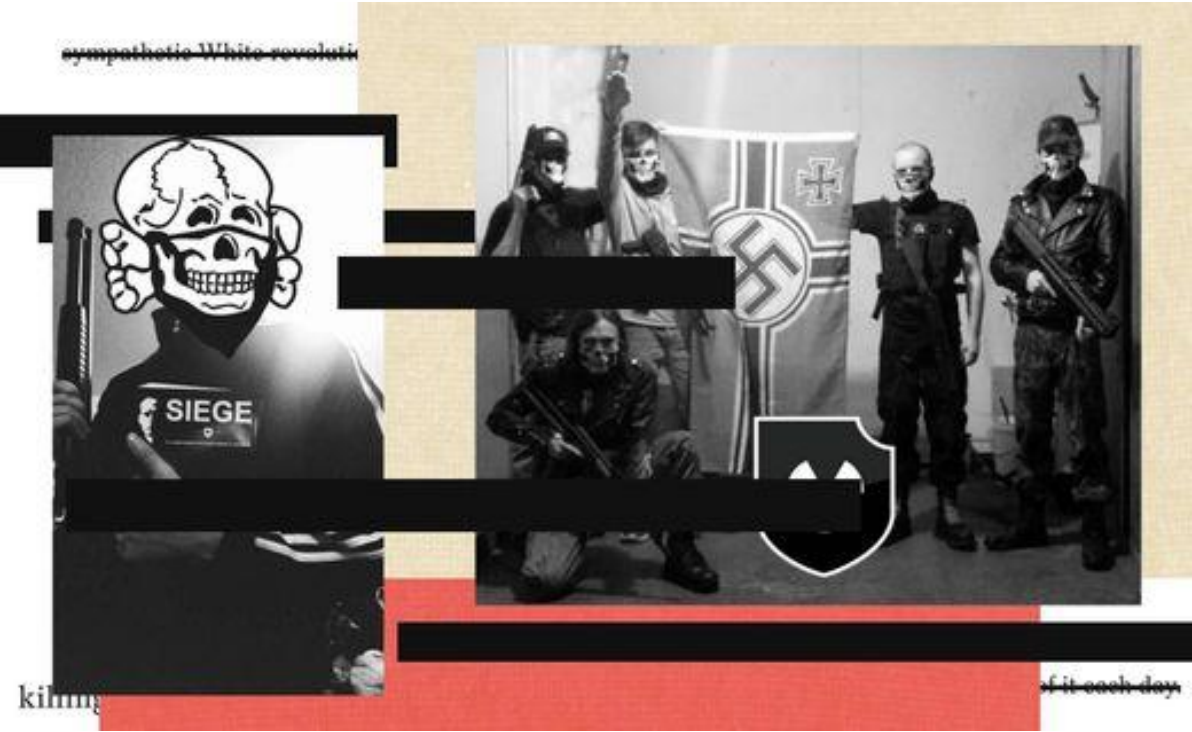
James Mason at his home in Denver (propaganda photo)

James Nolan Mason was an extremist even as a teenager. He joined the American Nazi Party of George Lincoln Rockwell when he was just 14 and became involved in the National Socialist Liberation Front in the 1970s. He has served several prison terms, including one stint for attacking a group of black men together with an accomplice. On another occasion, he was charged with child abuse. During a search of his apartment,

the police found naked photos of a 15-year-old girl along with swastika flags and photos of Adolf Hitler and his propaganda minister, Joseph Goebbels.

In the 1980s, Mason decided to publish his fantasies of power and violence in book form, which he called “Siege.” The tome – a collection of his bizarre newsletters, on which he collaborated with the sect leader Charles Manson – is full of Holocaust denials and ad hominem attacks on both homosexuals and Jews. Above all, however, it calls for the establishment of a network of decentralized terror cells and for taking up arms against the “system.” Mason’s goal has long been that of passing along his intolerant worldview to the next generations – and for a long time, he found no success. But that all changed in 2015.

James Mason and Atomwaffen Division



Propaganda photos from the Atomwaffen Division cell in Texas

That year, the Nazi group Atomwaffen Division (“Atomwaffen” is German for atomic weapon) was founded on the internet forum ironmarch.org, a discussion platform for neo-Nazis from around the world. The extremists discovered James Mason and were excited about his crazed, radical ideas. “Siege” became a must-read and Mason their ideological doyen.

But that isn't the only thing that makes them so dangerous, according to experts on right-wing extremism. Members are heavily armed and prepared to make use of their weapons. Indeed, they are getting ready for what they see as the coming race war in so-called "hate camps." Weapons training is conducted by members of the U.S. military, who are also among the group's members. According to one former member of Atomwaffen Division, newcomers must submit to waterboarding, in addition to other such trials. But who is behind Atomwaffen Division?

The first murder took place on May 19, 2017. That's when Devon Arthurs, 18, shot to death his two housemates, Andrew Oneschuk, 18, and Jeremy Himmelman, 22. All three were members of Atomwaffen Division, but Arthurs would later say that the other two didn't respect his faith. Arthurs, it turned out, had slowly become estranged from the group's right-wing extremist ideology, converted to Islam and began sympathizing with Islamic State.



Killer Arthurs (left), victims Oneschuk and Himmelman (right)

The group's leader, Brandon Russell, likewise lived in the shared residence and the police found firearms, ammunition and bomb-making supplies in the garage. Before the discovery, Russell had told followers in internal chats of his intention to blow up a power plant. He was sentenced to five years behind bars.

The Murders Continue

On Dec. 22, 2017, 17-year-old Nicholas Giampa shot and killed his girlfriend's parents in Reston, Virginia. They had forbidden their daughter from associating with him because of his right-wing extremist worldview. Giampa is open about both his admiration for James Mason and his membership in Atomwaffen Division. After the two killings, he shot himself as well, but survived.



Killer Giampa

The most recent murder committed by one member of the group, Samuel Woodward, took place not even a month later and the investigation into the incident is ongoing. The victim: 19-year-old college student Blaze Bernstein. Reporters from DER SPIEGEL were able to speak with police officials in Lake Forest, California, where the killing took place, in addition to the mother of the victim. We were also able to examine the private chat messages sent between the victim and friends, allowing a detailed reconstruction of the crime, that you can read [here](#).

When the rest of his fellow Atomwaffen Division members learned that Samuel Woodward had been arrested for the murder of a homosexual Jew, they began celebrating his crime, referring to him as a “gay Jew wrecking crew.” For the beginning of the trial, they even had T-shirts printed with Woodward’s image, complete with a swastika on his forehead.



Woodward's face printed on a T-shirt

Atomwaffen Division is not a group of online trolls who spread derogatory images and graphics on the internet. Rather, members share their propaganda within their own social media bubble and secret communication forums. DER SPIEGEL has gained exclusive access to the group’s internal chats.

Inside Atomwaffen

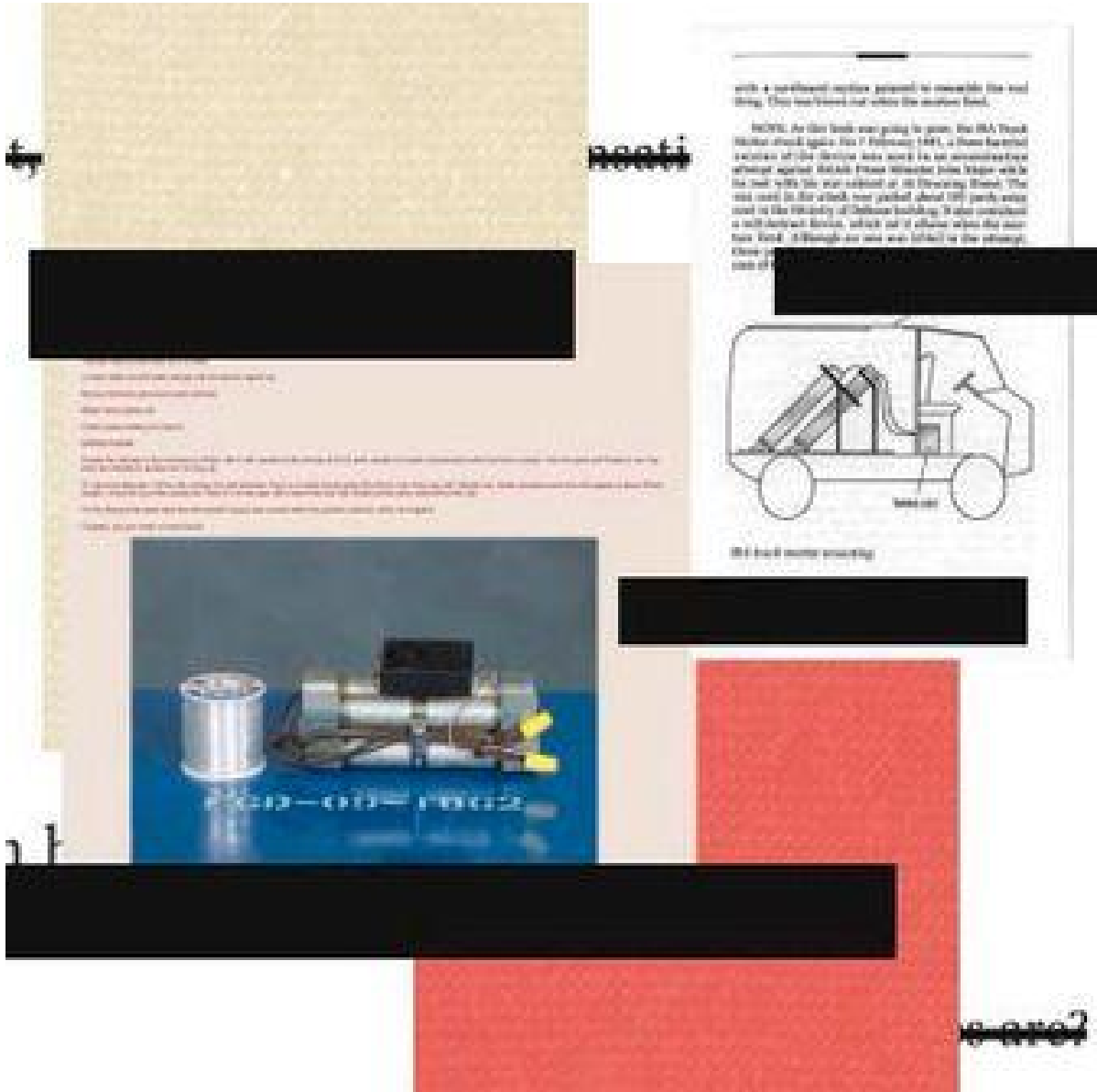
Those chats quickly make it clear that the group doesn’t just have it in for homosexuals, Jews and blacks. They also glorify all manner of right-wing extremist terror along with mass murderers like Timothy McVeigh, Dylann Roof and the Norwegian Anders Breivik.



Letter from Theodore Kaczynski

The group is also pen pals with the three-time murderer Theodore Kaczynski, better known as the Unabomber. They have set up a thread to discuss among themselves what questions they next want to ask of the imprisoned Kaczynski.

Yet interspersed in the discussions focused on their idols, National Socialism and violent video games, sentences such as the following can be found: “Carpetbomb your local refugee center;” “Bombing police stations is artistic expression;” and “I want to bomb a federal building.”



Bomb-building instructions

It is difficult to assess whether the online posing is an immediate precursor to concrete attacks. Members share links to archives, including hundreds of documents listing the preparations necessary for armed battle and terrorist attacks. Among them are handbooks that describe in detail how to carry out attacks on power plants, electricity grids and highway bridges – and dozens of instructions for building pipe bombs, car bombs and nail bombs along with directions for manufacturing delay detonators and powerful explosives out of household items.

A Broad Swath of Hate

But Atomwaffen Division doesn't just glorify right-wing extremist terror: Taken together, their chat messages convey a rather confusing picture. Members post images of people who have been beheaded or murdered in other ways, including execution videos made by Islamic State. They also share extremist interpretations of Koran verses. In one posting, the school shooting at Columbine High School was referred to as “a perfect act of revolt.”

The group is also extremely misogynistic. Members refer to women as “egotistical sociopaths that have no worth,” and as “whores” and “property.” One member writes that “every rape” is “deserved.” “I wouldn't even CALL it rape,” writes another. Pedophilia isn't a taboo either. “She bleeds she breeds” and “birth is consent” are just a couple of many such examples.

It is, in short, a broad swath of hate, from National Socialism to child abuse to Islamic State. So, how does it all fit together?

Memes of Hatred

The Hate Network

At some point, it was no longer enough for Atomwaffen Division members to simply read “Siege.” They wanted to meet its author in person. And in 2017, allegedly after searching for him for years, they tracked down James Mason, who had gone into hiding. A friendship developed along with a business relationship. By then, the marginally successful phase of Mason's Nazi career had long since passed and he was solidly on the path toward complete insignificance.

“James Mason passed the torch on to us.”

Atomwaffen member Denton

But the young Nazis from Atomwaffen Division set out to advance him into the digital era. They brought out Mason's dusty Nazi propaganda and repackaged it under



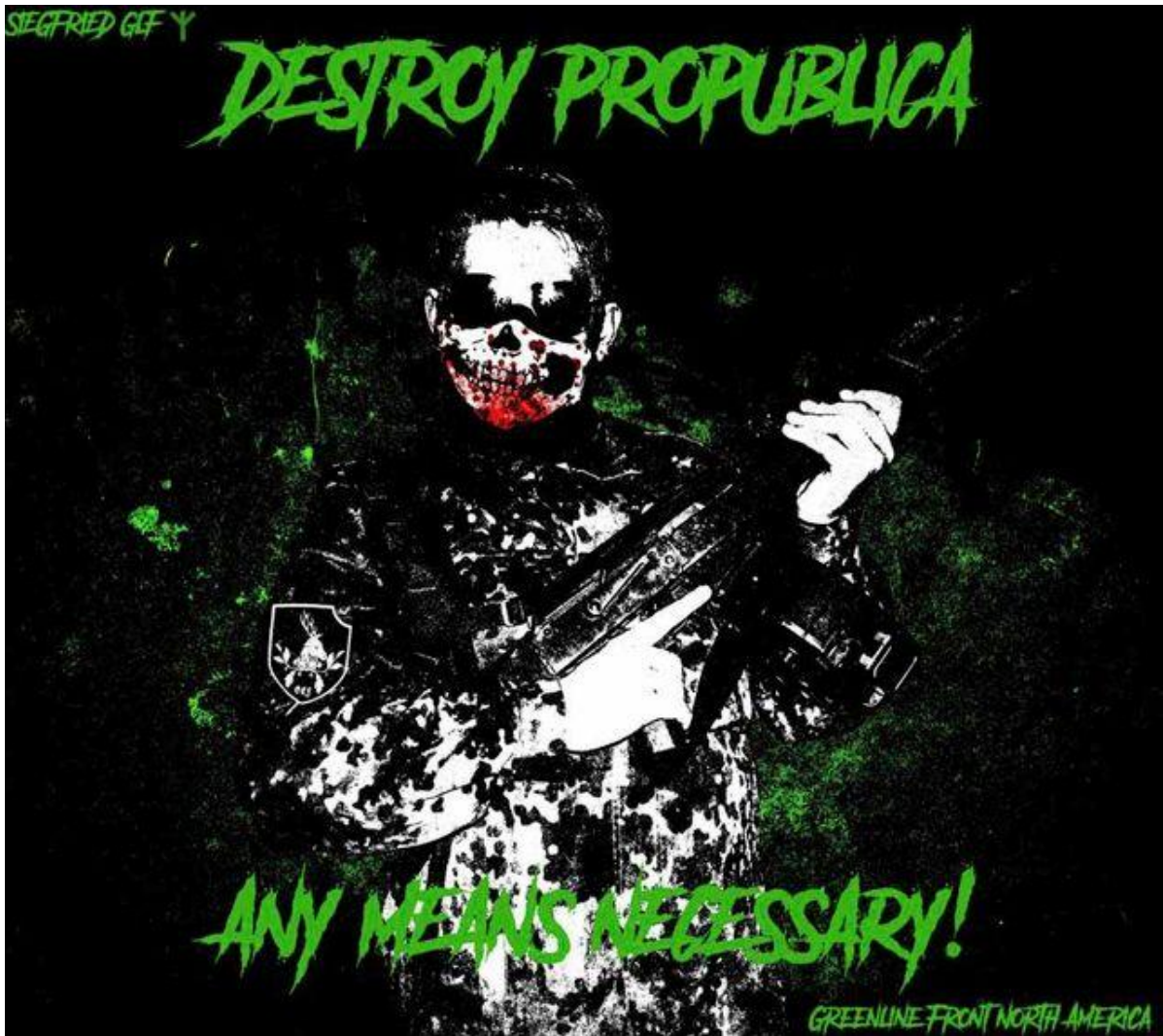
“Born to Kill”: When 17-year-old Dimitrios Pagourtzis shot and killed eight schoolchildren and two teachers, and injured 13 others, on May 18, 2018, the first propaganda posters appeared in a chat group just hours later.



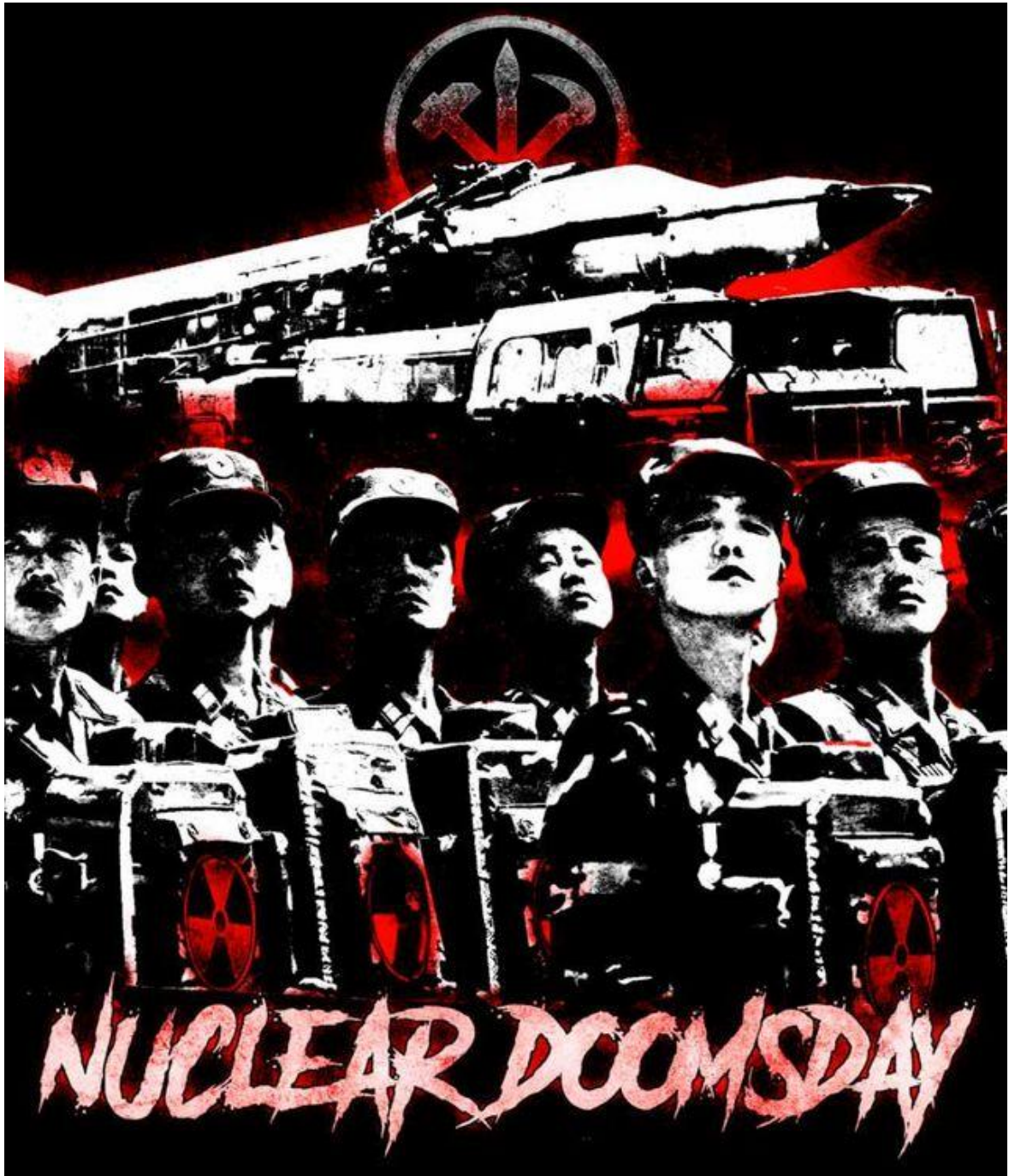
Osama bin Laden with a swastika: Atomwaffen Division celebrates the al-Qaida terror attack on New York. They refer to the World Trade Center as the Tower of Babel. "James Mason also admires Osama bin Laden because he struck Babylon's Whore," it is noted in one group chat.



Atomwaffen Division disseminated this photo (posed) on the internet together with a short story. Members also use their chat groups to share short stories they have written about torture and murder. Journalists who write about the group are often the subject of their violent fantasies.



“Destroy ProPublica” by “any means necessary,” reads a propaganda graphic posted by a group member who goes by “Wallcroft.” The same member posted the following question on Twitter: “Why doesn’t anyone just firebomb ProPublica?” At the beginning of this year, ProPublica exposed the identities of five Atomwaffen Division members.



The end of the world is an oft-encountered theme with Atomwaffen Division. “Are you ready for total collapse?” reads one of their posters. “We are.”

the label Siege Culture. Atomwaffen Division then began publishing his articles on a new website and also recorded podcasts with him. But the focus of Siege Culture is squarely on Mason's books. John Cameron Denton, the group's leader, claims to own the rights to the books.



Mason with Atomwaffen Division members (left), Denton visiting Mason (right)

Members of Atomwaffen Division take care of layout, promotion and sales. Five books are currently available, including a reissue of "Siege" and an even more bizarre collection of writings in which Mason claims that both Adolf Hitler and Charles Mason are reincarnations of Jesus Christ. Seven additional books are planned. They are printed and sold using Amazon's self-published platform CreateSpace.

On a recent Sunday morning at 8:25, the man to whom young Nazis flock is shuffling down East Colfax Avenue in Denver. He makes his way past the park that is home to several homeless people and down the street to a bus stop, where he picks a waiting spot that is a few steps away from the others. He appears to be in a good mood. What's he thinking about? What does this man who is so full of violence and hatred have to say? James Mason doesn't speak with journalists and has lived in hiding for more than 10 years. But he is happy to speak to an interested tourist from Germany. The following interview was conducted with a hidden camera:

For Atomwaffen Division, the cooperation with James Mason is important primarily because of the recognition it brings within the scene. It helps the group attract violence-

prone young men, and not just in the U.S. The cult surrounding Mason's "Siege" has produced a global network of fanatics. For some, contact is limited to the internet, but others travel across the globe to meet their fellow comrades. And new chapters of Atomwaffen Division have recently begun springing up. Here you can read which groups emerged and how far the network has spread.

Atomwaffen Division now acts as a global amalgamator of violence-prone young men, and James Mason is their inspiration. His young men promote a barbarous worldview and want to be as extreme as possible. From a rhetorical point of view, the Nazis have reached an acute level of zealotry. The only thing left is translating that hate into action.

"Many of you must step up your existential apartheid game," one member wrote in a chat at the end of July. "The internet can only give you pointers, not experience."

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The Ted K Archive

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<www.spiegel.de/international/the-hate-network-an-inside-look-at-a-global-extremist-group-a-1226861.html>

www.thetedkarchive.com