

RELEASE IN PART
B6

From: sbwhoep [redacted]
Sent: Saturday, October 9, 2010 10:50 AM
To: H
Subject: H: Dems should demand Boehner remove this GOP Nazi reenactor. Put Boehner in this blitzkrieg. Sid

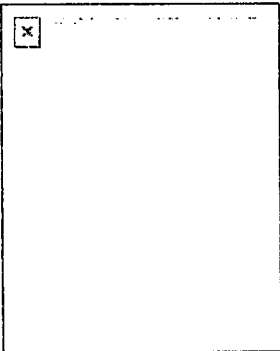
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Why is This GOP House Candidate Dressed as a Nazi?

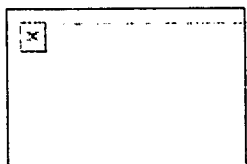
By Joshua Green

An election year already notable for its menagerie of extreme and unusual candidates can add another one: [Rich Iott](#), the Republican nominee for Congress from Ohio's 9th District, and a Tea Party favorite, who for years donned a German Waffen SS uniform and participated in Nazi re-enactments.



Rich Iott, second from right, in a Nazi SS Waffen uniform.

Iott, whose district lies in Northwest Ohio, was involved with a group that calls itself [Wiking](#), whose members are devoted to re-enacting the exploits of an actual Nazi division, the [5th SS Panzer Division Wiking](#), which fought mainly on the Eastern Front during World War II. Iott's participation in the Wiking group is not mentioned on his campaign's [website](#), and his name and photographs were removed from the Wiking website. When contacted by The Atlantic, Iott confirmed his involvement with the group over a number of years, but said his interest in Nazi Germany was historical and he does not subscribe to the tenets of Nazism. "No, absolutely not," he said. "In fact, there's a disclaimer on the [Wiking] website. And you'll find that on almost any reenactment website. It's purely historical interest in World War II."



Rich Iott and his wife, as shown on his campaign website.

Iott, a member of the Ohio Military Reserve, added, "I've always been fascinated by the fact that here was a relatively small country that from a strictly military point of view accomplished incredible things. I mean, they took over most of Europe and Russia, and it really took the combined effort of the free world to defeat them. From a purely historical military point of view, that's incredible."

Iott says the group chose the Wiking division in part because it fought on the Eastern Front, mainly against the Russian

Army, and not U.S. or British soldiers. The group's website includes a lengthy history of the Wiking unit, a recruitment video, and footage of goose-stepping German soldiers marching in the Warsaw victory parade after Poland fell in 1939. The website makes scant mention of the atrocities committed by the Waffen SS, and includes only a glancing reference to the "twisted" nature of Nazism. Instead, it emphasizes how the Wiking unit fought Bolshevist Communism:

Nazi Germany had no problem in recruiting the multitudes of volunteers willing to lay down their lives to ensure a "New and Free Europe", free of the threat of Communism. National Socialism was seen by many in Holland, Denmark, Norway, Finland, and other eastern European and Balkan countries as the protector of personal freedom and their very way of life, despite the true underlying totalitarian (and quite twisted, in most cases) nature of the movement. Regardless, thousands upon thousands of valiant men died defending their respective countries in the name of a better tomorrow. We salute these idealists; no matter how unsavory the Nazi government was, the front-line soldiers of the Waffen-SS (in particular the foreign volunteers) gave their lives for their loved ones and a basic desire to be free.

Historians of Nazi Germany vehemently dispute this characterization. "These guys don't know their history," said Charles W. Sydnor, Jr., a retired history professor and author of "Soldiers of Destruction: The SS Death's Head Division, 1933-45," which chronicles an SS division. "They have a sanitized, romanticized view of what occurred." Sydnor added that re-enactments like the Wiking group's are illegal in Germany and Austria. "If you were to put on an SS uniform in Germany today, you'd be arrested."

See web-only content:

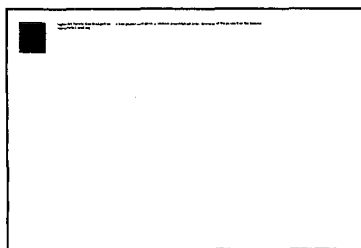
<http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2010/10/why-is-this-gop-house-candidate-dressed-as-a-nazi/64319/>

Christopher Browning, a professor of history at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, said, "It is so unhistorical and so apologetic that you don't know to what degree they've simply caught up innocent war memorabilia enthusiasts who love putting on uniforms."

lott says he does not recall exactly when he joined the Wiking group (his name appears on a unit roster as far back as 2003), but did so with his son "as a father-son bonding thing." He says his name and pictures were removed from the Wiking website not out of concern that they would harm his political career, but because he quit the group three years ago, after his son lost interest.

lott participated in the group under his own name, and also under the alias "Reinhard Pferdman," which has also been removed, and which lott described as being his German alter ego. "Part of the reenactor's [experience]," lott said, "is the living-history part, of really trying to get into the persona of the time period. In many, not just in our unit, but in many units what individuals do is create this person largely based on a Germanized version of their name, and a history kind of based around your own real experiences. 'Reinhard' of course is 'Richard' in German. And 'Pferdman,' 'pferd' is a horse. So it's literally 'horse man.'"

Asked whether his participation in a Nazi re-enactor's group might not upset voters, particularly Jewish voters, lott said he hoped it would not: "They have to take it in context. There's reenactors out there who do everything. You couldn't do Civil War re-enacting if somebody didn't play the role of the Confederates. [This] is something that's definitely way in the past. ... [I hope voters] take it in context and see it for what it is, an interest in World War II history. And that's strictly all."



lott at Nazi re-enactment.

Rabbi Moshe Saks, of the Congregation B'nai Israel in Sylvania, Ohio, a suburb of Toledo that sits in the 9th district, disagreed. "Any kind of reenactment or glorification of Nazi Germany, to us, would be something unacceptable and certainly in poor taste, if not offensive," he said. "I think the reaction here will be very negative. And not just among the Jewish community, but the broader community."

In a follow-up email today, lott seemed at pains to address concerns that his conduct may have alienated veterans groups but made no specific mention of possible offense to Jews or human rights groups: "Never, in any of my reenacting of military history, have I meant any disrespect to anyone who served in our military or anyone who has been affected by the

tragedy of war. In fact, I have immense respect for veterans who served our country valiantly, and my respect of the military and our veterans is one of the reasons I have actively studied military history throughout my life." He added that he has participated in re-enactments as a Civil War Union infantryman, a World War I dough boy and World War II American infantryman and paratrooper.

The actual Wiking unit has a history as grisly as that of other Nazi divisions. In her book "The Death Marches of Hungarian Jews Through Austria in the Spring of 1945," Eleonore Lappin, the noted Austrian historian, writes that soldiers from the Wiking division were involved in the killing of Hungarian Jews in March and April 1945, before surrendering to American forces in Austria.

"What you often hear is that the [Wiking] division was never formally accused of anything, but that's kind of a dodge," says Prof. Rob Citino, of the Military History Center at the University of North Texas, who examined the Wiking website. "The entire German war effort in the East was a racial crusade to rid the world of 'subhumans,' Slavs were going to be enslaved in numbers of tens of millions. And of course the multimillion Jewish population of Eastern Europe was going to be exterminated altogether. That's what all these folks were doing in the East. It sends a shiver up my spine to think that people want to dress up and play SS on the weekend."

This article available online at:

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