

## Sebastian Gorka: A Deeper Look at Controversial Allegations

Credible investigations from multiple media outlets continue to suggest that during and after his career as a Hungarian policy adviser and politician, Sebastian Gorka, Deputy Assistant and senior counter-terrorism advisor to President Trump, maintained ties to, and voiced opinions supportive of, extreme-right and antisemitic Hungarian groups and political parties. Additionally, during this time, Gorka wrote opinion pieces for news outlets widely known for their antisemitic views. Gorka has denied all allegations tying him to extremist and antisemitic groups, while offering varied explanations for his actions. He and his supporters have sought to discredit media reports that have exposed his past statements and actions, and rejected statements from present-day members of radical groups and other Hungarians affirming his affiliations. He and his defenders have noted that Gorka is not known to have personally voiced hateful or antisemitic views, though (as is detailed below), Gorka did publicly support the creation of an armed militia under the auspices of an antisemitic, extremist political party.

The following summarizes and provides context for what is known about Gorka's connections to groups espousing antisemitic views and policy prior to his time in the White House.

### **Alleged member or supporter of the Hungarian far-right antisemitic group “Historical Vitézi Rend”**

Multiple leaders<sup>1</sup> of the modern-day “Historical Vitézi Rend” and other Hungarian politicians unaffiliated with the group have stated that Gorka is an official member of the organization.<sup>2</sup> The “Historical Vitézi Rend” is a reconstitution of the World War II era “Vitézi Rend” (“Order of Heroes”), which Hungarian

historians describe as a virulently nationalist, antisemitic group originally established by Admiral Miklos Horthy, a self-avowed antisemite and collaborator with Hitler.<sup>3</sup> The State Department designated the Vitézi Rend as having been “under the direction of the Nazi Government of Germany during World War II,” and classifies members of the group as inadmissible to the United States under the Immigration and Nationality Act.<sup>4</sup> Modern Vitezi Rend members, according to retired Yale historian Eva Balogh, follow the same “ethical and moral code” as their 20th Century predecessors.<sup>5</sup>

This affiliation first surfaced when in January Gorka wore the favored uniform<sup>6</sup> of Horthy's supporters,<sup>7</sup> and a medal bestowed upon Horthy's Vitézi Rend to an inaugural ball for President Trump. In response to questions from NBC News, current Vitezi Rend spokesman Andras Horvath said, “When he [Gorka] appeared on U.S. television ... with the medal of the Vitez Order ... it made me really proud.”<sup>8</sup> Several people interviewed by NBC in the Hungarian town where Gorka ran for mayor in 2006 said it was well-known that Gorka was a member of the Vitezi Rend, and that he made no effort to hide his membership while campaigning.

Further, Gorka has on multiple occasions, including in written testimony before Congress, identified himself as “Dr. Sebastian L. v. Gorka.” According to Balogh and other experts, the initial “v.” is used by members of the Vitézi Rend to indicate formal membership in the group.<sup>9</sup> Gorka's known use of the “v.” goes back to at least 1998.<sup>10</sup>

Gorka has offered varied responses to the allegations detailed above. He defended his wearing of the Vitézi Rend medal in an interview with

Breitbart News, saying that he wore it to honor his parents' suffering under totalitarian regimes.<sup>11</sup> Gorka separately denied membership in the Vitézi Rend in an interview with Tablet Magazine, noting, "I have never been a member of the Vitez Rend. I have never taken an oath of loyalty to the Vitez Rend. Since childhood, I have occasionally worn my father's medal and used the 'v.' initial to honor his struggle against totalitarianism."<sup>12</sup> In an interview with the Telegraph, Gorka stated that "By the bye laws [of the Vitézi Rend] I inherited the title of Vitez through the merits of my father, but I never swore allegiance formally."<sup>13</sup> Gorka has not directly addressed why he began using the honorific "v." before his father's death if indeed he "inherited" the title, nor why he feels that the best way to honor his parents is through the public display of symbols associated with an antisemitic group whose members are barred from entry into the United States.

On March 19, 2017, Senators Durbin, Blumenthal, and Cardin wrote a letter to the Secretary of Homeland Security and Acting Attorney General asking for an investigation into whether Gorka falsified his U.S. naturalization application by failing to disclose his membership in the Vitézi Rend.<sup>14</sup>

**Participated in a conference with future leaders of an antisemitic extremist party; and founded a political party with breakaway members of the same group**

In 2007, Gorka co-founded a short-lived Hungarian political party, the New Democratic Coalition (UDK), with two former senior-ranking members of Jobbik, a political party the Anti-Defamation League has described as "openly anti-Semitic"<sup>15</sup> and the U.S. State Department has labeled "extreme ethnic nationalist."<sup>16</sup>

Gorka's defenders claim that the two Jobbik members joined Gorka in creating the UDK in part to distance themselves from Jobbik's antisemitic extremism.<sup>17</sup> Yet the Hungarian Free Press has presented proof that as early as 2003 Gorka

attended a conference organized by Jobbik's future Vice Chairman and attended by several future Jobbik MPs.<sup>18</sup> The event was advertised as an opportunity to discuss the future of "Hungarian National Radicalism," which the Free Press describes as a "euphemism for the Hungarian neo-Nazi movement."

**Public supporter of the neo-fascist paramilitary "Hungarian Guard"**

When asked in 2007 whether he supported Jobbik's plan to create a paramilitary militia during a televised interview, Gorka responded affirmatively "that is so."<sup>19</sup> During the show, a headline banner ran underneath Gorka which read "UDK [Gorka's new political party] Supports the Hungarian Guard." The UDK later reiterated Gorka's support for the militia on its website.

As Human Rights First has previously written, Jobbik leaders founded their paramilitary force in 2007 in part as a recruiting vehicle to draw more attention to their xenophobic platform.<sup>20</sup> Once created, the Hungarian Guard staged mass demonstrations in Hungary notable for episodes of violence against Roma people, including murders in 2008 and 2009. Members of the Guard wore uniforms similar to those of the Arrow Cross, a Hungarian fascist party that was installed in the final months of WWII and collaborated with the Nazis.

Hungary's highest court banned the Hungarian Guard in 2009 for its intimidating actions. The European Court of Human Rights upheld the ban in 2013, finding that the Hungarian Guard promoted "a certain vision of 'law and order' which is racist in essence."<sup>21</sup> Members of the Guard were well-known for their antisemitic views; in a 2008 speech, a captain in the Guard called Jews "Zionist rats," "locusts," and "nation-destroyers."<sup>22</sup>

In his television appearance, while distancing the UDK itself from Jobbik's plan to create the Hungarian Guard, Gorka defended his organization's support by noting that the Guard would serve "a big societal need."

Gorka's defenders have noted that at the time of his comments, he could not have known that the Hungarian Guard would devolve into violent acts, ultimately leading to its forced abolishment.<sup>23</sup> Yet before Gorka voiced his support for the group, he was aware that members of Hungary's Jewish community had raised concerns over a paramilitary force being formed in support of an extremist, xenophobic political party. In response to these concerns, Gorka noted during his interview that "This type of accusation is the very useful tool of a certain political class."

### Contributor to an antisemitic newspaper

In its 2004 country report on the state of human rights in Hungary, the U.S. Department of State noted, "The weekly newspaper Magyar Demokrata continued to publish anti-Semitic articles, and

featured articles by authors who have denied the Holocaust."<sup>24</sup> Magyar Demokrata's long-time editor-in-chief, András Bencsik, is openly antisemitic; Yale historian Balogh has declared him a neo-Nazi.<sup>25</sup>

In 2006 and 2007, Gorka wrote articles for Magyar Demokrata critiquing Hungary's then-socialist government and commenting on the perceived unfairness of a post-WWI treaty that stripped pre-war Hungary of territory.<sup>26</sup> When asked by a reporter whether he was aware of Bencsik's views or those espoused in Magyar Demokrata, Gorka insisted

"I am [...] unfamiliar with Bencsik. I believe it was one of his colleagues who asked me if I wanted to write some OpEds...everything I did was in the interests of a more transparent and healthy democracy in Hungary. This included a rejection of all revanchist tendencies and xenophobic cliques." ■

<sup>1</sup> <http://forward.com/news/national/366181/exclusive-nazi-allied-group-claims-top-trump-aide-sebastian-gorka-as-sworn/?attribution=home-hero-item-text-1>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/sebastian-gorka-made-nazi-linked-vitezi-rend-proud-wearing-its-n742851>

<sup>3</sup> <http://budapestbeacon.com/public-policy/rewriting-hungarys-history-veritas-holds-third-conference-this-year/16180>

<sup>4</sup> <https://fam.state.gov/fam/09FAM/09FAM030207.html>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/sebastian-gorka-made-nazi-linked-vitezi-rend-proud-wearing-its-n742851>

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.szekesfehervar.hu/index.php?pg=news\\_112412](http://www.szekesfehervar.hu/index.php?pg=news_112412)

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.tataikapucinus.hu/a-tortenelmi-vitezi-rend-allomanygyulese/>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/sebastian-gorka-made-nazi-linked-vitezi-rend-proud-wearing-its-n742851>

<sup>9</sup> <http://hungarianspectrum.org/2017/02/13/donald-trumps-influential-advisers-sebastian-and-katharine-gorka/>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.freepatentsonline.com/article/Harvard-International-Review/30308473.html>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mM3fzdZbkOw>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.tabletmag.com/scroll/227733/tale-of-trump-advisors-alleged-nazi-ties-unravels>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/03/19/donald-trump-aide-sebastian-gorka-denies-claims-has-links-hungarian/>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.businessinsider.com/sebastian-gorka-vitezi-rend-nazi-trump-2017-3>

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.jta.org/2012/08/01/news-opinion/world/hungarian-lawmaker-resigns-from-anti-semitic-jobbik-party-after-revealing-jewish-origins>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2015/eur/252855.htm>

<sup>17</sup> <https://pjmedia.com/blog/in-hungary-sebastian-gorka-fought-and-tried-to-undermine-the-anti-semitism-of-the-far-right/>

<sup>18</sup> <http://hungarianfreepress.com/2017/03/06/sebastian-gorka-attended-hungarian-far-right-conference-in-2003/>

<sup>19</sup> <http://forward.com/news/national/367937/exclusive-controversial-trump-aide-sebastian-gorka-backed-violent-anti-semi/>

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.humanrightsfirst.org/sites/default/files/HRF-report-We-Are-Not-Nazis-But.pdf>

<sup>21</sup> [http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#{"fulltext":\["vona v hungary"\],"documentcollectionid2":\["GRANDCHAMBER","CHAMBER"\],"itemid":\["001-122183"\]}](http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#{)

<sup>22</sup> <http://forward.com/news/national/367937/exclusive-controversial-trump-aide-sebastian-gorka-backed-violent-anti-semi/>

<sup>23</sup> <http://thefederalist.com/2017/04/04/the-latest-attack-on-sebastian-gorka-is-another-piece-of-shoddy-journalism/>

<sup>24</sup> <https://2009-2017.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2004/41685.htm>

<sup>25</sup> <https://hungarianspectrum.wordpress.com/tag/andras-bencsik/>

<sup>26</sup> <http://forward.com/news/national/364085/sebastian-gorka-trump-aide-forged-key-ties-to-anti-semitic-groups-in-hungary/>