



Declassified CIA files reveal that US intelligence officials went to great lengths to protect a Ukrainian fascist leader and suspected Nazi collaborator from prosecution after World War II and set him up in a New York office to wage covert war against the Soviet Union, according to a new report to Congress.

Mykola Lebed led an underground movement to undermine the Kremlin and conduct guerrilla operations for the CIA during the Cold War, said the report, prepared by two scholars under the supervision of the National Archives. It was given to Congress on Thursday and posted online.

During World War II, the report says, Lebed helped lead a Ukrainian nationalist organization that collaborated with the Nazis in the destruction of the Jews of the western Ukraine and also killed thousands of Poles. The report details postwar efforts by US intelligence officials to throw the federal government's Nazi hunters off his trail and to ignore or obscure his past.

"You can make the argument the CIA never should have gone near this guy because of his past," said Norman J.W. Goda of the University of Florida, who wrote the report with Richard Breitman of American University in Washington. But Goda said the CIA found the relationship to be so valuable for getting information into and out of the Soviet Union that it "couldn't be sacrificed."

"This was somebody that was very, very useful and remained so for the entire Cold War," he added.

The report, titled "Hitler's Shadow: Nazi War Criminals, US Intelligence, and the Cold War," was written by historians hired by the US National Archives and Records Administration.

The report draws from an unprecedented trove of records on individuals and clandestine operations that the CIA was persuaded to declassify and from over 1 million digitized Army intelligence files that had long been inaccessible.

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