# RIGHT-WING EXTREMISM IN ITALY

# THE CASE OF VENETO FRONTE SKINHEADS



# AN OPEN-SOURCE INTELLIGENCE ANALYSIS

## **DEVELOPED BY:**

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## ABOUT THE REPORT

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The OSINT Reports Series, of which this report constitutes the first release, has been developed with the aim of providing an overview of the potential applications, on a European scale, of open-source research and analysis methodologies in prevention and mitigation activities directed against a range of potential threats. Each report in the OSINT Reports Series will provide insights, gathered through open source intelligence, concerning a potential threat identified by Agenfor International Foundation with the support of public and private partners.

To conduct the research and analysis, the team involved in the project relied both on freely available tools and on an Al-powered OSINT software.

In accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), all available personal data have been anonymised and/or redacted.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Veneto Fronte Skinheads (also known as VFS) is a right-wing organisation, part of the neo-Nazi skinhead movement, founded in 1986. Albeit the group had already been active in the Italian region of Veneto for a few years, the first official appearance took place in Suffolk in England, during the second edition of "Rock Against Communism" [1].

At the end of the 1980s, the VFS conducted its propaganda activities by organising concerts with European groups politically affiliated with neo-Nazism and various Italian groups close to the movement. It also attempted, with some degree of success, to infiltrate some football fan clubs, in particular that of Hellas Verona, one of the football teams of the city of Verona [2]. The domains in which the VFS navigates are not only the stadium and the subculture of right-wing skinheads, but also institutional politics [3].

Since its inception, the movement has been known for repeated acts of violence and intolerance, with intimidation, beatings and aggression, especially towards foreign citizens or sympathisers of political areas critical of the group's neo-Nazi ideology [4]. Their actions included also attacks on party and association headquarters, as well as non-profit organisations [5]. The most recent relevant event of this kind is the break-in at the headquarters of the association Como Senza Frontiere in November 2017 [6].

Numerous members of the organisation, about forty according to studies by the Stephen Roth Institute, have been convicted over the years for violent and criminal episodes of which they were perpetrators and which can be directly traced back to their militancy and ideology, or for other offences covered by the Mancino law [7].



Official Logo VFS



Alternative Logo VFS



Homepage banner of the official VFS website





The OSINT analysis of this movement will consider four distinct themes that are indicative of the different areas in which the group operates, in order to give an overview of its fields of action and modus operandi. More specifically, the analysis will focus on the following elements:

- The use of a sockpuppet account [8] by the former VSF leader to participate in the online debate
- The participation of VFS members to recent right-wing rallies, reported in news site and social media
- "Return to Camelot": a right-wing music festival organized by VFS analysed through the information released by the organisation, participants, and anti-fascists movements.
- The online presence of some of the VSF militants that participated in the break-in at the offices of the network "Como Senza Frontiere".

## ANALYSIS

## FORMER LEADER OF VSF — USING AN ALIAS FOR THE ONLINE DEBATE

An initial research with the OSINT software of the name of the organization provided a starting point to the analysis by showing, in addition to the location of the headquarter of organization, email address associated with the organization the an (\*\*\*\*\*\*@\*\*\*\*\*\*@\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*.org). A second email address was found in the publicly available website of the organization (\*\*\*@\*\*\*\*\*\*.it) as the sole online contact point listed there. The same email address is listed as the online contact of VFS on the website of "Blood & Honour" [9], an extreme right-wing, neo-Nazi-oriented international political organisation founded in 1987 in the United Kingdom, which is also active as a neo-Nazi music promotion network [10], to which the VFS is affiliated.



Blood & Honour banner

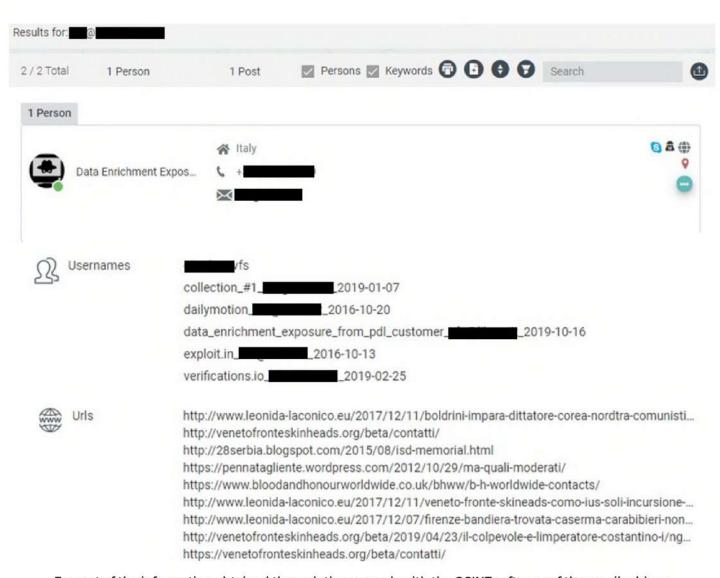
While the research with the OSINT software of the first email address did not provide significant results, the research of the second one returned some relevant information. Thanks also to a series of past leaks that included the researched email, the software tied to the address several information, including a name, "G.", a phone number, and a series of links to blogs and articles.

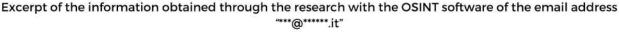




A quick research online of the name "G." paired with "Veneto Fronte Skinheads" showed that the name of the former president of the organization was indeed G.C. According to the VFS website, G.C had been appointed president of the movement in 2006 [11], and he was presented in online news articles as the leader of the movement at least until April 2019 [12], while in more recent articles, published in 2022, he is described as former president of the organization [13]. It is therefore possible to ascertain with a sufficient degree of certainty that G.C. was leader of the movement from 2006 until at least April 2019, and that the mentioned email address was indeed used by him while in charge of VFS.

Among the Urls that the OSINT software connected to the email address "\*\*\*@\*\*\*\*\*\*.it", several of them referred to a blog named "leonida-laconico.eu", which is not active anymore. However, from the Urls is still possible to understand that the blog posts treated topics of interest for right-wingers and, in one case, the VFS is openly mentioned.









A subsequent Google research of the name "Leonida Laconico" linked that same alias to an online article from January 2018, which reported an attack, perpetrated by members of the far-right organisation 'Casa Pound' in the proximity of their headquarters in Genoa, against a group of anti-fascists who were putting up political posters [14]. The only comment on the article was left by the user 'Leonida Laconico', whom thanks to the OSINT software we can tie back to G.C. with a good degree of certainty. In his reply he disputes the article's reconstruction of the event, accusing the online news site and the Italian mainstream media of factiousness. At the end of his comment, the user leaves a different e-mail address from the one already available for the analysis, "\*\*\*\*\*\*\*.\*\*\*\*@\*\*\*\*.com". By searching for this new address with the OSINT software, it was possible to trace other sites and online newspapers where G.C. had posted comments and opinions, again under the pseudonym 'Leonida Laconico'. To one of these articles, which dealt with a subject, the seizing of an illegal quarry in a national park in Sicily, only slightly related to the content of his reply, G.C. replied attacking Italy's left-leaning public prosecutors, European institutions, and cheering for Matteo Salvini, leader of the right-wing party "Lega" (formerly known as "Northern League") and at the time Minister of Internal Affairs of the Italian government [15].

#### Leonida Laconico

16 Gennaio 2018 alle 10:07 pm

Come se non bastasse la grande informazione informazione faziosa (La Repubblica, L'Espresso, II Fatto Quotid etc) anche voi nonscherzate di fronte ad ogni occasione per inventare accuse contro le destre.

Ma quando i centri sociali , gli anarchici ... assalgono con bombe molotov o come in quest'occasione che sulla base di una foto online troppo discutibile ,senza prove e senza il referto medico ufficiale , s'è scatenata la solita vergognosa accusa, quando ,ormai si sa che un ematoma viene tradotto per coltellata pur di creare un can can.

Questo vecchio trucco è stato usato per tentare d'incastrare ad Ostia Casa Pound in combutta col caprone della testata al giornalista rompiscatole ,mentre dopo ina settimana di martellamento il mafioso Spada è risultato tifoso del Movim.5Stelle.

Poi solo per citare i casi vicini : la bandiera nazista nella caserma dei carabinieri che dopo 1000 gaffe è risultata una bandiera della Germania imperiale.

Siete ancora in tempo, dopo le accurate indagini, a modificare il vs. assurdo commento: Si dimostra ancora una volta col suo vero volto, Casa Pound.

Translation of the two initial paragraphs of the comment:

"As if the mainstream partisan media (La Repubblica, L'Espresso, Il Fatto Quotidiano etc) were not enough, you too do not mess around at every opportunity to invent accusations against the Right. when social centres. anarchists attack with molotov cocktails or, as on this occasion, on the basis of a questionable online photo, without evidence and without an official medical report, the usual shameful accusation is unleashed, when by now it is known that a haematoma is reported as a stab wound [just] to create a fuss."

@g.com

Screenshot of the comment to the first article





Leonida Laconico 26 gennaio 2019 at 23:46

Ma non è bastata la precedente farsa della Diciotti finita con l'assoluzione di Salvini per la demenziale denunzia di una toga rossa? I poveri migranti sbarcati sotto minaccia di sequestro di persona se la sono squagliata, anche per la mancata promessa di accoglienza del Vaticano, tutti come clandestini. Ora ci ritroviamo di fronte ad un maldestro tentativo di ricatto emotivo senza una benché minima ragione di subire la totale retromarcia di un'Europa falsa, egoista e vile!. Forza Salvini!

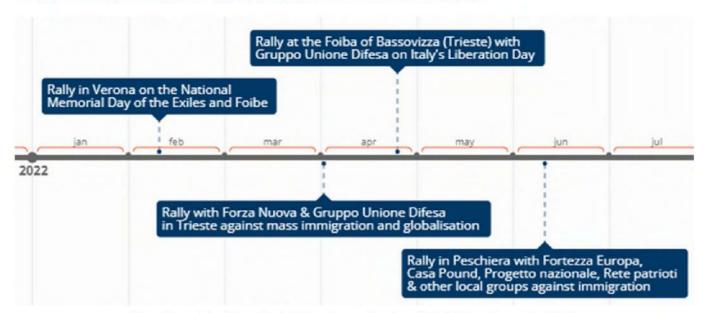
@ com

Screenshot of the comment to the second article

Translation of the final sentence of the comment of the comment:

"Now we are faced with a clumsy attempt at emotional blackmail without the slightest reason to suffer the total reversal of a false, selfish and cowardly Europe! Go Salvini!"

## VFS PARTICIPATION IN 2022 TO RIGHT-WING RALLIES



Timeline of the identified right-wing rallies in which VFS took part in 2022

By searching for the organisation's full name and/or acronym combined with a series of keywords ("rally", "protest", "demonstration") in the OSINT software and in search engines, it was possible to gather information on at least four gatherings of far-right movements in which the VFS took part during 2022.

The first meeting took place on February 2, when the 'National Memorial Day of the Exiles and Foibe' is commemorated in Italy. On that day, VFS militants gathered in Verona, in the square that also memorialises the victims of the Foibe, to commemorate the killing and forced exile of Italians and democratic or anti-communist Slavs ordered by communist dictator Josip Broz Tito [16].







Frame of a video of the rally in Verona on 11/02/2022



di Verona STRADE GIARDINI MOBILITA' TRAFFICO TECNICO CIRCOSCRIZIONI ARREDO URBANO

#### Ordinanza Dirigenziale n. 126 del 07/02/2022

OGGETTO: ASSOCIAZIONE CULTURALE VENETO FRONTE SKINHEADS PRESIDIO E CIRCOLO CITTADINO DI FRATELLI D'ITALIA PRESIDIO COMMEMORATIVO - PIAZZA MARTIRI D'ISTRIA FIUME E DALMAZIA IN PROGRAMMA PER IL GIORNO 10 FEBBRAIO 2022 - ISTITUZIONE PROVVEDIMENTI VIABILISTICI.

#### IL DIRIGENTE

PREMESSO che il giorno 10 febbraio 2022, il Circolo Cittadino di Fratelli d'Italia organizza un Presidio commemorativo ore 18.00 e l'Associazione Culturale Veneto Fronte Skinheads organizza un Presidio commemorativo alle ore 20,00, in piazza Martiri d'Istria Fiume e Dalmazia:

RAVVISATA pertanto la necessità di adottare gli opportuni provvedimenti viabilistici atti a consentire un regolare svoligimento della manifestazione ed a salvaguardare nel contempo, la pubblica incolumità;

SU RICHIESTA dell'Assessorato al Decentramento;

AVUTE presenti le esigenze del traffico e le caratteristiche delle strade e piazze; VISTI:

Fordine di servizio n. 39/a 76-08, P. G. n. 34707 del 03.05.1999, l'art. 107 del D.Lgs 18.08.2000 n. 267 e successive modificazioni, l'art. 80 dello Statuto Comunale, gli articoli 5, 6 e 7 del Nuovo Codice della Strada;

#### ORDINA

#### Per i motivi descritti in narrativa:

- I dalle ore 16.00 alle ore 21.00, e comunque fino a fine esigenze, del giorno 10 febbraio 2022, viene istituito il divieto di sosta con facoltà di rimozione in piazza Martin d'Istria Fiume e Dalmazia, nell'area adiacente ai giardini (5 stalli sotto la targa commemorativa);
- 2 vengono temporaneamente revocate tutte le Ordinanze nelle parti che fossero eventualmente in contrasto con presente provvedimento:
- 3 di individuare quale responsabile del procedimento l'Arch. Nicola Macchiella;
- 4 il Corpo di Polizia Locale provvederà per quanto di competenza mandando, a chiunque spetti, di osservare e fare osservare il presente provvedimento;
- 5 di dare atto che il presente provvedimento sarà:
- a comunicato in copia:

Authorisation released by the municipality of Verona to hold the memorial rally



Picture of the square where the rally was held





The second episode dates back to April 2, when VFS militants with members of Forza Nuova and Gruppo Unione Difesa, both extreme right-wing formations, demonstrated in Trieste against mass migration and globalisation [17].



Picture of the rally in Trieste on 02/04/2022 - Banner: "No to a multiracial society"

The third rally took place on April 25, in conjunction with Italy's Liberation Day, at the Foiba of Bassovizza in Trieste, again to commemorate the Italian victims of Tito's communist regime and, indirectly, to challenge the meaning of that national holiday, which commemorates the liberation of Italy from Nazi-fascist forces. During the commemoration ceremony, members of the VFS marched with a banner bearing their organisation's logo and gave the Roman salute. Members of the organisation Gruppo Unione Difesa also participated in the event [18].



Frame of a video of the rally in Trieste on 25/04/2022





The last rally considered was held on June 11. On this date, several far-right organisations demonstrated in Peschiera del Garda, a tourist location in the province of Verona, to protest against the disorders that took place in the municipality on June 2 at the hands of a large number of young people, most of whom were apparently of Maghreb origins [19]. The participants in the rally denounced the Italian government's migration policies and the invasion of migrants that they claim is plaguing Italy [20]. Among the demonstrators were militants of the VFS, Casa Pound, Progetto Nazionale, Fortezza Europa, Rete Patrioti, and other smaller groups [21].



Frame of a <u>video</u> of the rally in Peschiera del Garda on 11/06/2025 Banner: "Let's defend our land, Let's protect our people!"

## "RETURN TO CAMELOT": A RIGHT-WING MUSIC FESTIVAL ORGANIZED BY VFS

Return to Camelot ("Ritorno a Camelot" in Italian) is a right-wing music festival that VFS organises usually every five years, where entertainment, politics and sports merge. The bands invited usually come from several countries and belong to the RAC (Rock Against Communism) music scene, which includes several subcategories of white power/hate music [22].

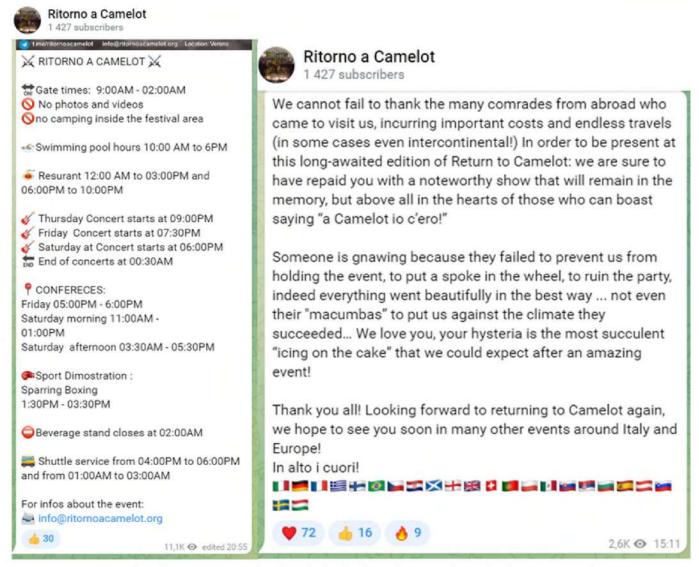






Flyers of the "Return to Camelot Festival" (2022-2016-2011-2006-1991) In 2021 an additional one-day festival was held, called "Road to Camelot





Examples of messages sent by the admins in the Telegram channel "Ritorno a Camelot"

However, activists of "Veronesi aperti al mondo - Verona città aperta", a self-described network of "antifascists, antiracists, antisexists of Verona" were able to identify the specific location of the event, a private agritourism at the outskirt of the city of Verona [24]. Furthermore, despite a strict "no video & no photo policy" introduced by the festival organisers, it was also possible to retrieve from major social media, through the OSINT software, pictures openly shared by individuals that took part in the four-day event. In one of them it is possible to identify in the background a structure very similar to the one that appear in several official pictures of the agritourism [25]. In 2019, a customer of the agritourism posted online a picture that shows, potentially, the location from where the initial photo was taken in 2022 [26].













Top left: a picture posted by a participant to the event | Top right: a picture posted in 2019 by a customer of the agritourism | Bottom left & right: official pictures of the agritourism posted online

# THE 2017 BREAK-IN AT THE OFFICES OF THE NGO "COMO SENZA FRONTIERE": THE ONLINE PRESENCE OF THE VSF MILITANTS

On the evening of 28 November 2017, in the city of Como, VFS militants, mainly from Veneto, Lombardy, Liguria and Emilia Romagna, interrupted a meeting of volunteers from Como Senza Frontiere, a network of associations in the city of Como, during which the organisation and distribution of aid (foodstuffs, blankets) to migrants in transit through the city was being decided. The Naziskin surrounded the participants - forcing them to suspend their work and listen to the reading of a statement against immigration and those who support migrants. The video of the raid was published the following day in several newspapers and 13 members of the group were identified and placed under investigation. On 2 February 2022, all 13 defendants were convicted of aggravated private violence at first instance.





Eleven of them were given a sentence of one year and eight months, and the remaining two a sentence of one year and nine months [27]. All the names of the defendants (who were subsequently convicted) were published by an Italian newspaper at the beginning of the trial in November 2020, together with their age and municipality of residence [28].

With regard to the present OSINT analysis, it is interesting to note that at least two of the thirteen convicted individuals, I.S. and M.T., following their identification by the police continued to openly share posts on Facebook in which they showed their affiliation to the VFS and their adherence to the organisation's values. The social accounts of both individuals were identified through the OSINT software's search function.

In the case of I.S., on his Facebook profile at least three posts identified, shared between August 2018 and February 2019, refer to his role as a member of the VFS. The post from August 2018 shows the poster of a concert organised by VFS (it is possible to see the VFS logo at the top right corner of the image) in memoriam of the frontman of Skrewdriver (a neo-Nazi white supremacist rock band that gave birth to the RAC genre), who was also the founder of the Blood & Honour movement. In December 2018, I.S. posted a VFS poster against the United Nations Global Compact, a non-binding United Nations pact to encourage businesses and firms worldwide to adopt sustainable and socially responsible policies [29]. In February 2019, the militant posted a newspaper article reporting that a VFS delegation visiting the city of Mantua had placed flowers on the memorial stone of Andreas Hofer, a Tyrolean who in 1809 became the leader of the Tyrolean Rebellion against the Napoleonic and Bavarian invasion and was subsequently captured and killed by Napoleonic troops in Mantua [30]. The phrase "honour to the patriot Andreas Hofer" accompanied the post.











Images posted by I.S. on his Facebook page between August 2018 and February 2019

As for M.T., on his Facebook profile he posted a series of photos of VFS rallies between November 2018 and June 2021, as well as an image of the organisation's logo. Furthermore, in his Instagram profile description his membership of VFS is clearly expressed.











Pictures & image posted by M.T. on his Facebook page between between November 2018 and June 2021 | Bottom left: M.T.'s Instagram profile description

# CONCLUSION

The analysis based on open-source material, conducted through the use of the OSINT software and a number of other tools freely available online, provided a deeper insight into several aspects of the activity and modus operandi of the Veneto Front Skinheads.





First, the analysis showed how the VSF leader used an alias to comment on articles or posts published. The use of a recurring alias may have served to provide credibility to the user's messages in the eyes of other interlocutors with whom he interfaced, who often belonged to the same political area as his own, and who may therefore have already encountered that same alias in previous discussions, on that same platform or in other ones. At the same time, the use of a pseudonym allowed G.C. to insert himself in a public debate while maintaining anonymity with respect to his person and his role as president of the Veneto Front Skinheads. It cannot be excluded that other members of the organisation used the same system. In order to be able to perform more comprehensive analyses and define the degree of dangerousness of an individual, it is therefore believed that in the future it will be increasingly important to be able to link the different identities employed online by individuals who are inspired by or belong to extremist organisations.

Secondly, the collection of information on rallies attended by the VFS during 2022 shows that the organisation is firmly embedded in a network of far-right organisations with which it collaborates on a recurring basis. It is evident how the study of open-source material makes it possible to deepen and map the links between Italian and European far-right organisations in a much more agile manner than in the past.

Thirdly, the analysis of the information gathered on the "Return to Camelot" festival showed first of all how the organisation is part of an international circuit of extreme right-wing organisations (also demonstrated by its affiliation to the Blood & Honour network) and how it is able to attract through this type of initiative, in which music, politics and entertainment merge, an audience that is not only Italian. Moreover, by organising this type of event, the VFS demonstrated a not inconsiderable organisational and logistical capacity. Finally, the reporting activities against this event pursued by organisations and networks such as "Verona Città Aperta", as well as the numerous sites and blogs of anti-fascist organisations or those dedicated to the defence of human and civil rights consulted in the course of this research, demonstrate the existence of a network of local organisations with a granular knowledge of extremist phenomena occurring in their territories.

Fourthly, the analysis of the identity of the VFS members convicted for the break-in at the headquarters of the Como Senza Frontiere network showed how the organisation could count on militants residing not only in its reference region, Veneto, but all over northern Italy. Moreover, the analysis of the social profiles of two of the convicted individuals showed how, in the years following the event in question, the two militants continued to remark in public posts their membership to the Veneto Front Skinheads and their adherence to its values, despite the on-going investigations and trial.





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