

**Testimony of:**

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**Before:**

House Committee on Foreign Affairs

Subcommittee on the Middle East, North Africa, and International Terrorism

-and-

House Committee on Homeland Security

Subcommittee on Intelligence and Terrorism

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***“Meeting the Challenge of White Nationalist Terrorism at Home and Abroad”***

**ORAL TESTIMONY & SUMMARY**

Thank you, Chairman Thompson and Chairman Engel, Chairman Deutch and Chairman Rose, ranking members Wilson and Walker, and distinguished members of these vital committees and institution. I am honored by your invitation to testify today. I am privileged to be here, considering my past. I am a former extremist.

In 1987, I was recruited into America’s first neo-Nazi skinhead group, and at 14 years old became one of the youngest and earliest members of what was then a “fringe” hate movement. For the next eight years, I recruited other vulnerable youth, acted as a mouthpiece for hate, and wrote racist music that I performed for thousands of white supremacists across the U.S. and Europe. I rose quickly through the ranks to become a leader of the same “white nationalist” movement that thirty years later on August 12, 2017, marched in Charlottesville chanting “The Jews will not replace us” and killed a young woman named Heather Heyer.

I escaped extremism in 1996 through the compassion of people I least deserved it from—black and Latinx Americans, Jews, people from the LGBTQ community, and Muslims— who brought me back to humanity.



After disengaging, I obsessed over how a typical, middle-class, teenage son of Italian-American immigrant parents could become a violent white supremacist who forged alliances overseas. To better understand my own radicalization, I went “back in,” this time to prevent others from venturing down the same dark path. The number of former extremists I have helped disengage—“formers” as we’re called—is now in the hundreds from around the world, including a returned foreign fighter of the so-called Islamic State.

What I’ve learned over thirty years is that the United States is losing vital ground in a battle we have yet to acknowledge exists.

Violence by white supremacists has skyrocketed in America. Data from the FBI and groups like the Anti-Defamation League clearly document this disturbing trend. But the greater threat that has gone largely unchallenged for decades, is how the tentacles of American white-nationalism extend far beyond our own borders into a deep network of global terror.

American white nationalists have spent decades building alliances with their counterparts overseas. They have developed a sophisticated online presence, and receive material support from foreign allies through digital influence campaigns that directly bolster narratives and propaganda and extend their reach. Like ISIS, white nationalists also distribute glossy print and electronic propaganda and produce high quality recruitment videos. They trade in digital currency, use social media and encrypted platforms to communicate, share ideas and resources, lure new sympathizers, and plan attacks. This is just what’s occurring in their online ecosystem.

In 2018, the FBI reported white-supremacists from Scandinavia, northern Europe, and the United States were training as foreign fighters with foreign paramilitary groups like the neo-Nazi Azov Battalion in Ukraine and in far-right “Partizan” training camps in Russia.

They inflict terror the same way as foreign terrorist groups: bombing government facilities, interruption of critical infrastructure, using high-capacity military-style assault weapons against “soft civilian targets,” assassinations, and use of vehicles to target crowds.

We tend to view white-nationalist attacks like those in Charleston or El Paso as isolated hate crimes. But I can’t stress enough that this view is dangerously naive and will continue to expose Americans until we acknowledge this threat as persistent and pervasive. White nationalism is a fast-growing global movement whose members are preparing for a coming “race war,” while simultaneously trying to initiate one.



The shooter in attacks on two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, earlier this year posted a manifesto online deeply aligned with the core ideas of American white-nationalist leaders—though he was a 28-year-old from Australia. In video of the attack, a Ukrainian Azov Battalion patch is visible on the killer’s body armor. This is just one example of how international cooperation leads to a body count. There are dozens more deadly incidents that have occurred recently right here at home.

When we think of terrorism by the so-called Islamic State, we acknowledge the international dimensionality and the foreign special interests that allow it to exist and grow. We must do the same when it comes to white-nationalist terrorism as a matter of national security. Adequate terrorism laws already exist to thwart and prosecute terrorists, as do plenty of capable and talented people who are ready to defend us from the threat of harm, but the current counter-terrorism mandate doesn’t provide for the proper focus, resources, funding, or in some cases, the correct holistic approach to effectively counter extremism.

Keeping Americans safe requires a strategy that redefines the threats we face. It must be a balanced, non-political, non-partisan, and non-discriminatory approach that recognizes violent white nationalism as part of the global threat matrix. But neutralizing violence is only half of the equation. Preventing radicalization in future generations of Americans is also critical. Policy reform and a public health approach that protects those who are vulnerable to recruitment and offers services to people who want to disengage will be the key to long-term success in countering violence-based extremism.

I have submitted an expanded written statement for the record. I am at your disposal and welcome your questions. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Christian Picciolini  
Free Radicals Project, Founder



## THE HOMEGROWN THREAT OF WHITE NATIONALISM

In 2017, the FBI stated 7,000 hate crimes were reported in the United States.<sup>1</sup> But considering many hate crimes go unreported by law enforcement agencies due to the high level of difficulty classifying and prosecuting them, the real number is even more staggering. The Anti-Defamation League published a similar report in 2019, concluding incidents of American far-right violence accounted for nearly *all* hate-related murders in 2018.<sup>2</sup>

Atomwaffen Division is a neo-Nazi group that even other Nazis are spooked by. Appropriating symbols and an old moniker from Hitler's National-Socialist Party, Atomwaffen—"Atomic Weapons" in German—are a well-armed, paramilitary neo-Nazi "death cult," responsible for at least five murders since 2017.<sup>3</sup> Members worship the teachings of Adolf Hitler and American Nazi Party *fürher* George Lincoln Rockwell, which includes calls for the extermination of Jews, the overthrowing of the U.S. government through acts of terrorism, and the assassination of anyone they consider an enemy. Followers believe themselves to be devout National-Socialists (Nazis). Most outside observers have aligned them with the Alt-Right and white nationalism at-large—not wholly inaccurate since Atomwaffen members and flags emblazoned with their logo were present in Charlottesville at Unite the Right in 2017.

Many hoping to escape the stigma of the militant white-supremacist movement consider Atomwaffen too extreme. But their leaders know how to draw in disillusioned, young white males, whose only medium for acceptance is the virtual world, and whose shared frustrations stem from the real world that they perceive has sidelined and emasculated them.

Atomwaffen Division members have conducted weapons and combat training in at least four U.S. states in recent years. Current and former members of the military who have found their skills highly valued have been recruited for leadership roles within the group. Drawing on their battlefield experience, soldiers have helped shape the group into a loose collection of terrorist cells. Followers are encouraged to engage in lone-wolf attacks against people and places that serve minority groups (especially the LGBTQ+ and Jewish communities), government facilities, and critical public infrastructures including electric power grids, gas pipelines, water filtration systems, and nuclear energy plants.

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<sup>1</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation. (November 2018). *Hate Crime Statistics, 2017*.

<sup>2</sup> Anti-Defamation League. (January 2019). *Murder and Extremism in the United States in 2018*.

<sup>3</sup> Mathias, C. (2018, February 1). *1 Neo-Nazi Group. 5 Murders In 8 Months*. HuffPost. Retrieved from [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/atomwaffen-nazi-murder-bomb-plot\\_n\\_5a70825ae4b00d0de2240328](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/atomwaffen-nazi-murder-bomb-plot_n_5a70825ae4b00d0de2240328)



By 2018, Atomwaffen cells were springing up in cities across America. Although it is hard to say exactly how many are part of the group due to their clandestine nature, members have claimed 100 exist in thirty cells across at least twenty-five states. Although the threat of 100 Atomwaffen operatives seems like a relatively small number in a nation as large as the United States, we must not forget it took only nineteen men to murder three-thousand people on 9/11. By using digital media and the internet as a virtual recruiting ground, Atomwaffen Division has reached huge numbers of alienated young people with their seductive narratives.

In recent years, groups linked to Atomwaffen Division have also sprung up in Australia (Antipodean Resistance), Canada (Northern Order), the United Kingdom (Sonnenkrieg Division and National Action), Atomwaffen Division Germany, Greece's Golden Dawn, CasaPound in Italy, and the Nordic Resistance Movement—Atomwaffen's Scandinavian affiliate. More troubling, perhaps, is that Atomwaffen's growth has largely gone unnoticed by U.S. law enforcement, because homegrown far-right extremists have become de-prioritized as a focus of extremism prevention efforts.

Like the so-called Islamic State (ISIS), their radical counterparts in the Middle-East, groups like Atomwaffen and a new variant called "The Base" (the literal translation of "Al-Qaeda") have gone from recruiting idealistic college students with eye-catching posters that contain provocative imagery and bold headlines like, "A New Order Will Rise from the Ashes of the Kike System," and "Race War Now!" to producing slick and sophisticated recruitment, propaganda, and combat training videos for online distribution to boost visibility—to committing murder.

Since 2017, members have murdered people at an alarming rate. In a horrific anti-Semitic and homophobic killing, a twenty-year-old member in California killed a gay, Jewish college classmate, stabbing him over twenty times before burying his body in a shallow grave.<sup>4</sup>

Police charged a twenty-one-year-old member from Florida—the geographic nucleus of Atomwaffen—with possessing functioning bomb-making devices and radioactive materials, which he intended to use in attacks on synagogues and nuclear power plants. Among other personal possessions, police found Third Reich paraphernalia and a framed photograph of

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<sup>4</sup> Thompson, A. C., Winston, A., & Hanrahan, J. (2018, January 26). *California Murder Suspect Said to Have Trained with Extremist Hate Group*. ProPublica. Retrieved from <https://www.propublica.org/article/california-murder-suspect-atomwaffen-division-extremist-hate-group>



Timothy McVeigh.<sup>5</sup> In the same incident, another eighteen-year-old Atomwaffen member who converted to radical ISIS supporter shot and killed two neo-Nazi roommates when they ridiculed his transformation, claiming he'd gone “from Communist to Nazi to full Islamic State”—a prime example of a phenomenon I call “cult hopping,” where individuals jump from one extreme ideology to another.

When another seventeen-year-old Atomwaffen supporter in Virginia became rebuked by his girlfriend's parents because they wouldn't allow her to date him due to his racist beliefs, he murdered the couple in cold blood.<sup>6</sup>

Atomwaffen Division members still actively train in parts of the United States for a violent white revolution—or they vow they will die trying. A recent three-day event in Death Valley in the Nevada desert they called “Hate Camp” saw members training with automatic weapons for what their training videos called a “race war.”<sup>7</sup>

## THE “MAINSTREAMING” STRATEGY OF WHITE NATIONALISM

The value of maintaining their more-visible militant remnants remained important to the movement-at-large for purposes of intimidation, but its value faded in the mid-1980s as virtual spaces like social media began to replace physical recruiting grounds like playgrounds, parks, and skate parks. In its place, a strategy unfolded to present a more-sanitized hate movement to the American mainstream. It took decades to cultivate and continued developing long after I disengaged from the movement, but the tactic was effective.

The most significant example of modern white-power extremism camouflaging itself to infiltrate the American mainstream is the case of David Duke, the former grand wizard of the Louisiana Knights of the Ku Klux Klan. It was in 1989 when he shed his traditional Klan hood and robe to don the three-piece suit of a D.C. politician and won a seat in the House of Representatives for the State of Louisiana. But since early 2016, the plan to mainstream white-supremacist ideology took on a life of its own. Things began to shift when David Duke set up shop in Moscow.

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<sup>5</sup> Thompson, A. C. (2018, November 20). *An Atomwaffen Member Sketched a Map to Take the Neo-Nazis Down. What Path Officials Took Is a Mystery*. ProPublica. Retrieved from <https://www.propublica.org/article/an-atomwaffen-member-sketched-a-map-to-take-the-neo-nazis-down-what-path-officials-took-is-a-mystery>

<sup>6</sup> Jouvenal, J. (2018, December 23). *A teen is charged with killing his girlfriend's parents. They had worried he was a neo-Nazi*. Washington Post. Retrieved from [https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/public-safety/teen-charged-with-killing-girlfriends-parents-they-had-worried-he-was-a-neo-nazi/2017/12/23/e2102894-e761-11e7-833f-155031558ff4\\_story.html?noredirect=on](https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/public-safety/teen-charged-with-killing-girlfriends-parents-they-had-worried-he-was-a-neo-nazi/2017/12/23/e2102894-e761-11e7-833f-155031558ff4_story.html?noredirect=on)

<sup>7</sup> Thompson, A. C. (2018, February 23). *Inside Atomwaffen As It Celebrates a Member for Allegedly Killing a Gay Jewish College Student*. ProPublica. Retrieved from <https://www.propublica.org/article/atomwaffen-division-inside-white-hate-group>



During his hiatus from U.S. politics, Duke wrote, and he traveled several times to Russia to promote his book, *The Ultimate Supremacism: My Awakening on the Jewish Question*. While there, he became enamored with the strongman ethno-nationalist ethos of the newly elected Russian President, Vladimir Putin. Duke's anti-Semitic book, a top seller, is featured in the bookstore in the main lobby of the Russian Duma (Congress). Eyeing a potential new ally in highly motivated, post-Soviet Russia, Duke left Louisiana and moved to Moscow in 1999, where he rented a flat and lived for five years.<sup>8</sup>

While living there, Duke became acquainted with Aleksandr Dugin, a former sociology professor at Moscow State University. Branded "Putin's Rasputin" by former Trump White House chief strategist Steve Bannon, Dugin rose to prominence as a policy advisor to Russian President Vladimir Putin's top political and military leaders after the Soviet collapse. The privileged son of an intelligence officer, Dugin is an avowed fascist who subscribes to the ideology of neo-Eurasianism—a school of thought which believes Russia and the former Soviet Republics are neither part of Europe or Asia, and that "Greater Russia" must reclaim these lost territories and redefine itself as Russian Orthodox ethno-continent. Dugin's book, *Foundations of Geopolitics*, is allegedly required reading for new members of the Russian General Staff Academy.

The blossoming of this bond between the Putin regime and America's white nationalists is the same attempting to disrupt America and other Liberal Democracies around the world. It traces back to this kinship between David Duke and Aleksandr Dugin, and by extension, Putin.

Meanwhile, other leaders within the American white-nationalist movement have also spent time abroad forging a network of like-minded far-right groups and drawing inspiration from them.

Aside from his former marriage and his two children with an avowed Putin propagandist, Alt-Right leader Richard Spencer has long been building alliances with like-minded far-right groups in Sweden—a country he's now banned from entering along with twenty-five other European nations—with the goal of building a global Alt-Right media network.

David Duke, Richard Spencer, and other white nationalists like Jared Taylor of the Council of Conservative Citizens, continue to promote their racist agendas among American and Canadian academics and fascist government leaders in Russia, Ukraine, and Hungary, among other countries trending politically to the far-right in recent years.

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<sup>8</sup> Thompson, A. C. (2001, January 6). *Ex-Klansman David Duke Sets Sights on Russian Anti-Semites*. Los Angeles Times. Retrieved from <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2001-jan-06-mn-9088-story.html>



## **THE GLOBAL THREAT OF WHITE NATIONALISM**

Unless we understand the full scope of the global white-supremacist movement, we will remain ignorant as to how it spreads within our own borders—and we will continue to fail in defending our democracy of its lasting threat.

In recent decades, wider networks have been established between American white nationalists and their counterparts overseas. The tragic events in Charlottesville, Poway, Charleston, Pittsburgh, Overland Park, Washington D.C., Oak Creek, El Paso, Gilroy, Las Vegas, and Oklahoma City—in cities and towns across the United States—are but singular battles in a transnational war.

On March 25, 2019, an Australian white supremacist attacked two Christchurch, New Zealand mosques with an assortment of loaded semi-automatic assault weapons. Through a Facebook live stream, the world watched as the shooter massacred 52 peaceful Muslim—men, women, and small children. The killer wore identifiable white-nationalist movement markings on his body armor—insignia supporting Azov Battalion, a deadly neo-Nazi militia in Ukraine—and left behind a manifesto that provided further evidence of a growing global terror network.

To further magnify this chaos, hostile foreign actors emboldened by our nation’s fractured sociopolitical environment and our collective distress, are aiding domestic and foreign extremists in hunting for fresh recruits within vulnerable communities like multiplayer online games, internet forums dedicated to depression and autism, and in apps frequented by our children. They are baiting Americans—mostly male, young, intelligent, middle class, idealistic, disillusioned, and alienated—with influence tactics, internet memes, and elaborate online conspiracy theories that artificially feed a growing antipathy toward the mainstream.

## **THE WHITE-NATIONALIST “FOREIGN FIGHTER” PHENOMENON**

More disturbing than the vile rhetoric espoused by these extremist ideologues is the way that these budding transnational partnerships have been proving deadly. Just as the deserts of the Levant have drawn young fighters from around the United States and Europe, the unrest along Ukraine’s border with Russia and in Crimea has attracted white-supremacists—to fight on both sides of the battle.

The Azov Battalion, a Ukrainian National Guard regiment with a large neo-Nazi contingent rooted in ultranationalist soccer hooliganism, have drawn foreign fighters from the European





continent, Brazil, Russia, and the United States. Known for flying Nazi battle flags from their tanks and uniform markings that resemble the wolfsangel, or “wolf’s hook”—a symbol used by the Nazi military and Panzer tank divisions—Azov Battalion have been accused of ethnic racism, “ISIS-style” war crimes, and torture.<sup>9</sup>

Further evidence of this growing transnational white-supremacist alliance is seen in the scores of white-supremacists from Scandinavia and northern Europe, even the United States, traveling to Russia for combat training in far-right “Partizan” paramilitary camps.<sup>10</sup>

Average Americans tend to view attacks like the killings in Charleston and Charlottesville as isolated hate crimes, the work of a “deranged” racist or a small group lashing out in anger, unconnected to a broader global white-supremacist movement. I can’t stress enough that this view is dangerously naive, and one we can no longer afford to indulge.

White extremists from around the globe are gaining battleground experience and weapons training in places like Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and Russia. Where they’ll take their deadly skills next should be of great concern to U.S. national security.

## **THE DEEPER RUSSIAN CONNECTION TO WHITE NATIONALISM**

Since the disbanding of the Soviet Union and the subsequent rise to power by former KGB officer turned president, Vladimir Putin, the Russian propaganda machine has cultivated a consistent sentiment of discord throughout various countries and extremists around the globe by rallying them around two perceived enemies: immigrants and the “global (Jewish) elite”—whose alleged goal is to infect the world with multiculturalism to bring it to its knees.

Even before the formation of the Soviet Union and the KGB intelligence directorate in the early part of the twentieth century, the Russian Empire became known for using active measures, an intelligence tactic designed to influence and disrupt the affairs of its enemies. Honed over decades to advance interests both at home and abroad, Russian active measures remain perhaps the biggest threat to democratized nations since the Cold War ended. Why would the Russian government promote tactics that disrupt Western democracies? The broad consensus among the American Intelligence Community is, faced with continued economic turmoil, that Putin wants

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<sup>9</sup> Sharkov, D. (2014, September 10). *Ukrainian Nationalist Volunteers Committing 'Isis-Style' War Crimes*. Newsweek. Retrieved from <https://www.newsweek.com/evidence-war-crimes-committed-ukrainian-nationalist-volunteers-grows-269604>

<sup>10</sup> Lester Feeder, J., Mannheimer, E., Lytvynenko, J. (2014, September 10). *These Swedish Nazis Trained In Russia Before Bombing A Center For Asylum Seekers*. BuzzFeed. Retrieved from <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/lesterfeder/these-swedish-nazis-trained-in-russia>



to destabilize multilateral institutions like NATO, international trade agreements like the European Union, and thriving Western democracies like the United States and the United Kingdom, who he believes are conspiring to limit Russia's ability to thrive.

Since Putin's regime took power in 1999, Russia's anti-immigrant and neo-Nazi movements—directing their rage toward ethnic minorities, Jews, and Western democracies—have exploded and become the biggest and most influential in the world. Russia's strategy to undermine public trust by flooding public opinion with false narratives came as no revelation to me. Eight years of fear-mongering and spreading lies for extremist recruitment, using tactics like Russian disinformation—*dezinformatsiya*—had honed my ability to recognize it.

One of the most effective examples of using disinformation in psychological warfare is a 1903 forged document called *The Protocols of the (Learned) Elders of Zion*. A text I devoured thirty years ago as an eager young skinhead, only to learn eight years too late it was a fabricated piece of propaganda commissioned by Tsar Nicholas II to demonize Jews living in Russia. The fictionalized *Protocols* were manufactured to appear as a leaked manifesto of a secret cabal of Jewish leaders allegedly conspiring to subvert Christianity and control global economies by organizing the world's Jews to manipulate governments, financial institutions, and the press. So pervasive became one of the world's earliest instances of viral “fake news,” suggesting Jews were responsible for the spread of communism, that American automobile pioneer Henry Ford—a female Russian acquaintance gifted him the book by no less—funded the printing of a half-million copies and distributed them in car dealerships throughout the United States. Alongside the faux *Protocols*, was Ford's own six-book series titled *The International Jew*, his anti-Semitic canard chronicling what he considered in 1920 to be the “Jewish menace.” The falsehoods promoted in the Russian forgery and anti-Semitic writings of Henry Ford became central to the worldview of Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party and remains the most influential conspiracy theory circulating among today's neo-Nazis, anti-Semites, and militant jihadis.

In recent decades, the internet has enabled American white nationalists to establish a vast global network to coordinate with their counterparts overseas. Online message boards and social media platforms have been instrumental to the expansion of this transnational network. Anonymous supporters and internet trolls have used Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and message forums like 4chan, 8chan, Gab, and Reddit to proliferate their ideas, sometimes even successfully pushing their memes to the political fore.

And as cutting-edge technologies have emerged, the Soviet Union and now Vladimir Putin's Russian Federation have intensified their struggle for political power against the West. In recent



decades, their ability to deploy disruptive active measures also evolved into more elaborate and scalable schemes. But the core mission has always remained the same: use sustained influence campaigns by spreading false information to disrupt, divide, and undermine Western democratic societies—namely the United States of America.

Enter Putin’s personal “web brigades”—his virtual troll army. Operating in nondescript buildings in Moscow and St. Petersburg, these “troll factories” use young Russians, paying them up to two-thousand dollars a month if they make their quota of duping unsuspecting Americans with disinformation postings from fake social media accounts. One such Russian troll factory was a firm called Internet Research Agency (IRA), which U.S. intelligence officials have said interfered and influenced the 2016 presidential election.

IRA’s graphic design department created incendiary memes, while another division studied political discourse in other countries to detect social and political vulnerabilities. Russia saw the underpinnings of American partisanship as an opportunity to take advantage of the deepening political divide in the U.S. by amplifying existing division and sowing discord among Americans. Trolls impersonated Americans online to irritate existing sore spots, stir political tensions and mobilize opposing activists, by tearing open old racial wounds with provocative postings across social media. Leading up to the election, Russian troll factories used nearly one-thousand people to make millions of posts, create and distribute conspiracy theory videos, viral memes, fake news, and misleading infographics to persuade and enrage the American public.<sup>11</sup>

During Putin’s Cold War KGB days, psychological influence operations may have included the filtering of disinformation through printed materials, or through undercover agent provocateurs to a group of influencers. Now, technology allows the micro-targeting of millions of people in real-time through their online behaviors, potentially influencing the world on a much larger scale, which Putin accomplished when the IRA purchased ads and started affinity groups on Facebook to target unsuspecting users with disinformation during the 2016 presidential election.

In cyberspace, the United States and other traditional superpowers are trailing far behind the technological sophistication and sheer man-power of foreign adversaries like Russia and terrorist groups. For over a decade, rivals including North Korea, China, and Iran have been mapping the computer systems of thousands of U.S. power grids, water-processing facilities and pipelines, financial institutions, as well as the data servers of healthcare and technology companies, leaving

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<sup>11</sup> House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence. (2018, December 23). *Exposing Russia’s Effort to Sow Discord Online: The Internet Research Agency and Advertisements*. Retrieved from <https://intelligence.house.gov/social-media-content/>



our country's infrastructure vulnerable to widespread failure and its citizens open to attack. More recently, the U.S. Intelligence Community reported foreign state-sponsored hackers had infiltrated the electronic voting systems of several U.S. states during the 2016 presidential election and that future attacks were also likely.

However, it's not only our public and private infrastructure—crucial as it is to almost every aspect of modern American life—under attack. While efforts to bolster our cyber defenses and develop offensive digital combat strategies are a top priority for our intelligence community's defense of the nation, it is the weaponization of our own citizens by foreign intelligence influence campaigns that are, perhaps, the most alarming and immediate crisis we face today.

Putin's ingenious strategy of melding traditional spycraft with modern technology leveled the virtual battlefield, making a war fought with computer code and invisible saboteurs infinitely more cost-effective than using tanks and rockets but with effects equally devastating.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

America's repeated failure to understand the white-supremacist movement of today as a violence-driven global movement rather than a "fringe" American problem has prevented us from developing a clear strategy to effectively combat it. When we think of terrorism by the so-called Islamic State, we acknowledge the international dimensionality and the foreign special interests that allow it to exist and grow. We must do the same when it comes to white-nationalist terrorism as a matter of national security.

Adequate terrorism laws already exist to thwart and prosecute terrorists, as do plenty of capable and talented people who are ready to defend us from the threat of harm, but the current counter-terrorism mandate doesn't provide for the proper focus, resources, funding, or in some cases, the correct holistic approach to effectively counter extremism.

Keeping Americans safe requires a strategy that redefines the threats we face. It must be a balanced, non-political, non-partisan, and non-discriminatory approach that recognizes violent white nationalism as part of the global threat matrix. But neutralizing violence is only half of the equation. Preventing radicalization in future generations of Americans is also critical. This must happen through policy reform and a public health approach that supports legitimate initiatives that offer services for people who want to disengage from extremism and enable them with a managed path forward.



## **ABOUT FREE RADICALS PROJECT**

The Free Radicals Project is a global disengagement platform that fills a niche role in aiding individuals, and their families and communities, to exit hate and violence-based extremism through a non-aggressive, community-led approach of individual resilience-building, reconnection, cross-cultural immersion, and making amends. (freeradicals.org)

Free Radicals Project is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

## **ABOUT CHRISTIAN PICCIOLINI**

Christian Picciolini is a leader in the field of extremism intervention, prevention, and disengagement. He trains and lectures for the U.S. government and law enforcement agencies around the world in the most effective approaches to countering violence-based extremist movements. Before the Cook County of Illinois United States Attorney's Office appointed him to perform the first court-mandated "intervention" of a hate crime perpetrator, Christian helped launch exit programs in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Slovakia. He is also an award-winning television producer, a public speaker, author, peace advocate, and a former violent extremist. His involvement in, and exit from, the early American white-supremacist skinhead movement is chronicled in his memoir *White American Youth*. He leads the Free Radicals Project, a global extremism prevention and disengagement network, and has helped hundreds of individuals leave hate behind. The MSNBC documentary series 'Breaking Hate' spotlights this work. Christian's forthcoming book, *Breaking Hate: Confronting the New Culture of Extremism*, will be released on February 25, 2020. (christianpicciolini.com)