



# COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Subcommittee Hearing Statement of Chairman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS)**

### ***Assessing the Threat from Accelerationists and Militia Extremists***

**July 16, 2020**

This Committee is known for following the threats, wherever they may lead. Today, that brings us here. This hearing provides us with an opportunity to examine the emerging threat from violent anti-government extremists.

I believe today's hearing is the first Congressional hearing to focus specifically on the emerging threat from "accelerationists"—and I applaud Chairman Rose for examining this issue. It is important that Members and the American public hear from these experts today to understand these emerging threats.

Recent attacks and arrests have showcased the threat from individuals affiliated with the Boogaloo movement. This loose coalition of extremists present an immediate danger to law enforcement and the American people. As our experts have shared in their written testimony, this movement is complex and requires a nuanced understanding.

The Boogaloo network as a whole appears to be largely anti-government, constantly changing, and drawing followers from the fringes of many different extremist ideologies. The common thread is the desire to accelerate society toward a second civil war. That means that many of them are driven to commit violence. It is imperative that the Department of Homeland Security and other federal agencies immediately devote resources toward understanding and confronting these emerging threats. I understand that this is a difficult issue. But it is not acceptable for DHS to remain in the dark.

Law enforcement officials remain a top target of accelerationists and other extremists, which means that it is even more urgent for DHS to produce and disseminate information to state and local law enforcement so they can stay ahead of the threat. Federal resources and attention must also be appropriately allocated. We need to follow the threat. We shouldn't be swayed by political winds.

It goes without saying that property damage and any and all violence linked to Antifa should be condemned. But public reporting, arrest records, the government's own reporting all indicate that right-wing extremists pose a more urgent and lethal threat to Americans. We will hear today from these experts about the actual deadly threats facing Americans.

I am also looking forward to a discussion on how the violent fringes of these movements have utilized online platforms to their advantage. This has been a major concern of mine over the last Congress, and one of the reasons I introduced H.R. 4782, the National Commission on Online Platforms and Homeland Security Act. The Commission would seek to understand how bad actors, including extremists, exploit online platforms in furtherance of violence. This bipartisan piece of legislation was voted out of this Committee in October 2019 and awaits action from our colleagues in the Energy and Commerce Committee.

This Committee will continue to shed light on how social media platforms are exploited—and also hold the companies accountable when they fail to enforce the policies they have set forth to combat extremists.

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