



COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Subcommittee Hearing Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS)

Hearing on Republicans deflecting and refusing to discuss right wing violence

May 16, 2023

Before I begin, I would like to join the people of Buffalo, New York in observing the recent one-year anniversary of the Tops supermarket shooting, in which a far-right extremist who embraced the Great Replacement theory killed 10 people in a racist rampage.

Marking the anniversary of the Buffalo supermarket shooting with a hearing on “left wing extremism” displays a shocking lack of sensitivity to the scores of individuals harmed by right-wing violence. At best, today’s hearing is a missed opportunity to conduct meaningful oversight over how the government is combating the disturbing trend in right-wing violence that is wreaking havoc on communities across the country. At worst, it is a shameful attempt to whitewash and deflect attention from inaction on gun violence and the threat posed by far-right extremist groups by vastly overstating the consequences of left-wing extremism.

Allow me to provide some additional context of recent violent extremist events.

In 2021, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence assessed that domestic extremists motivated by white supremacist and anti-government ideologies pose the “most persistent and lethal threats” to the nation.

Data supports that conclusion.

According to the University of Maryland’s National Consortium of the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), there have been 170 foiled mass casualty plots by right-wing extremists and 52 plots resulting in injuries or death between 1990-2021. During that same period, there have been 29 foiled mass casualty plots by left-wing extremists and 11 plots resulting in injuries or death. Moreover, according to the Anti-Defamation League, far-right extremists committed every single one of the 25 extremist-related murders that occurred in 2022. White supremacists committed 21 of those 25 murders.

To be clear, Democrats condemn violence in every form – ideologically motivated or otherwise. That is why, earlier this year, I sought to add language to the Committee’s oversight plan committing to doing our part to combat domestic violent extremism and antisemitism. Every single Republican opposed my amendment. It is also worth noting that, despite Republican efforts to link “left-wing extremists” to Congressional Democrats, Democrats do not court the vote or support of far-left extremist groups.

In contrast, when he was asked to condemn “white supremacists and militia groups,” former President Trump directed the Proud Boys to “stand back and stand by.” Three months later, as the Proud Boys, Oath Keepers, and other far-right extremists attacked the Capitol to thwart the peaceful transfer of

power, even as they were beating police officers, it took the former President 187 minutes — over three hours — to direct the attackers to leave the Capitol. Not only did the former President fail to condemn far-right groups and ideologies, he allowed them to flourish. Now, they are emboldened. For example, in November a white supremacist murdered 5 and shot 17 at an LGBTQ+ nightclub in Colorado.

Last month, we learned that a low-level National Guardsman in Massachusetts, with a love of guns and a desire for a “race war,” leaked highly classified documents relating to military operations in Ukraine, jeopardizing national security and the lives of thousands. And just this month, a neo-Nazi murdered 9 and injured 10 others in a mass shooting at a mall in Allen, Texas. Historical data makes it clear that far-right extremists — particularly white supremacists — are a clear and present threat to homeland security. Recent events show the problem is getting worse, not better.

Unfortunately, my Republican colleagues choose to ignore the threats posed by right-wing extremism in favor of playing politics. I urge my colleagues to focus on the facts, and use their power and influence to combat dangerous, deadly far-right violence.

Before I close, I would like to call attention to the disturbing connection between guns and domestic violent extremism. The Center for American Progress found that guns were used in 83 percent of murders involving domestic extremists in 2021, and that 10,000 people every year are victims of hate crimes involving guns. We owe it to communities like Buffalo and Allen to do more than send thoughts and prayers. We need to take meaningful action to make people safer.

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