



U.S. Department of Justice

Federal Bureau of Investigation

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Washington, D. C. 20535-0001

November 13, 2020

The Honorable Bennie G. Thompson  
Chairman  
Committee on Homeland Security  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Max Rose  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Intelligence & Counterterrorism  
Committee on Homeland Security  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Elissa Slotkin  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Thompson, Chairman Rose, and Representative Slotkin:

This responds to your letter, dated September 25, 2020, to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) regarding the scope of the Domestic Terrorism (DT) threat and the FBI's work to combat this threat. The FBI has appreciated our multiple engagements with the Committee on this topic.

As Director Wray testified before the Committee on September 17, 2020, the FBI has over 1,000 pending DT investigations. This figure fluctuates and represents a snapshot in time amid a fluid and rapidly evolving threat picture. Moreover, individual subjects may perpetrate acts of violence or criminal conduct based upon overlapping ideologies or overlapping motivation(s) – or based on acts for which the FBI cannot immediately identify an ideological motivation. As with any threat, the FBI conducts comprehensive investigations that build out criminal or terrorist networks to determine who is involved in the criminal activity and identify co-conspirators. Where appropriate, the Department of Justice may pursue conspiracy charges of such individuals. It is important to emphasize that open cases represent only ongoing allegations of federal criminal activity, and cases are closed when further investigation demonstrates that there is insufficient evidence to sustain criminal charges.

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The persistent and evolving DT threat is present throughout the United States across urban, suburban, and rural areas. The FBI has DT investigations in all 50 states across all 56 of our Field Offices. Since 2015, there have been lethal DT attacks in: California; Colorado; Florida; Georgia; Indiana; Kentucky; Louisiana; Montana; New Jersey; New York; Oregon; Pennsylvania; South Carolina; Tennessee; Texas; and Virginia.

The year of 2019 was the most lethal for Domestic Violent Extremist (DVE) violence since the Oklahoma City Bombing in 1995. In 2019, there were five lethal incidents, resulting in the deaths of at least 32 victims. Four of these five attacks – those in Poway, California; El Paso, Texas; Jersey City, New Jersey; and Monsey, New York – were committed by Racially or Ethnically Motivated Violent Extremists. In 2020, there have been at least three lethal incidents, resulting in the deaths of at least three victims. Notably, these incidents in 2020 were all perpetrated by Anti-Government or Anti-Authority Violent Extremists.

The FBI has conducted approximately 120 federal DT arrests in Fiscal Year 2020. Among these arrests:

- Approximately 50% were Racially or Ethnically Motivated Violent Extremists. Of these, the vast majority are RMVEs who advocate for the superiority of the white race.
- Approximately 45% were Anti-Government or Anti-Authority Violent Extremists. Of these, approximately one-third are Militia Violent Extremists and approximately one-third are Anarchist Violent Extremists.
- Small percentages are Animal Rights/Environmental Violent Extremism, Abortion-Related Violent Extremism, or in the All Other DT Threats category.<sup>1</sup>
- Six sets of arrests of multiple DT subjects who had substantiated coordination or communication in relation to a specific plan, plot, or incident.

The FBI analyzes and assesses trends in DT based on the motivations of individuals to commit violent or other federal criminal acts, and our threat categorizations reflect this approach. DVE subjects articulate or identify with different drivers, grievances, ideological movements, belief systems, or other concepts. These drivers are not themselves elements of a criminal offense, but may be a motivator. For example, in the past year, the FBI has arrested or otherwise disrupted individuals who adhered to neo-Nazi ideology, who referenced the “Boogaloo” concept, who self-identified as “Antifa,” and who espoused COVID-19-related conspiracy theories. We are also increasingly seeing terrorism threats that do not fall neatly into categories: a growing number of subjects are individuals who are ascribing to blended or mixed ideologies, or even individualized belief systems, to justify their desire to commit violence. For example, in June 2020, the FBI’s New York Joint Terrorism Task Force arrested an individual for allegedly planning an attack on his U.S. Army Unit by sending sensitive details about the unit to multiple

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<sup>1</sup> “All Other DT Threats” encompasses threats involving the potentially unlawful use or threat of force or violence in furtherance of ideological agendas that are not otherwise defined under or primarily motivated by one of the other DT threat categories.

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extremists, including to a purported member of al-Qa'ida and to individuals associated with RMVE ideology. In September 2020, FBI Minneapolis arrested two individuals who were allegedly endeavoring to advance the "Boogaloo" concept and also developed an interest in providing arms to Hamas.

Coordination and information sharing with federal, state, and local partners are critical to combatting DT threats, violence, and other illegal activity. The FBI, working with the National Counterterrorism Center and/or the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), produces *Joint Intelligence Bulletins* (JIBs) that communicate updated threat information and assessments to our federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial partners at the Unclassified // Law Enforcement Sensitive level. JIBs alert our partners to significant arrests – including those accomplished through collaboration among different law enforcement entities – and trends we have observed in both the international and domestic counterterrorism arenas. In 2020, we have produced approximately ten JIBs highlighting DVE, and specifically RMVE and Anti-Government or Anti-Authority Violent Extremist threats. In addition, the FBI works closely with our federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial law enforcement partners through the Joint Terrorism Task Forces and through the Terrorism Liaison Officers Program. The FBI continues to work on innovative ways to share information more efficiently, and to pursue a variety of lawful methods to stay ahead of these threats.

Finally, the FBI understands the importance of the statutory requirement to produce a strategic intelligence assessment and data on domestic terrorism, as required by Section 5602 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020 (Pub. L. 116-92). On November 10, 2020, the FBI and DHS delivered to the Committee a report required by Section 5602(a), titled "Domestic Terrorism: Definitions, Terminology, and Methodology." The FBI is working with our partners to expeditiously complete the report required by Section 5602(b). We appreciate the Committee's patience regarding unforeseen delays due to the COVID-19 pandemic and related reduced staffing for mission critical functions.

Thank you for your support of the FBI, its mission, and its people.

Sincerely,



Jill C. Tyson  
Assistant Director  
Office of Congressional Affairs