



Department of Justice

STATEMENT OF

**TIMOTHY LANGAN
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
COUNTERTERRORISM DIVISION
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION**

BEFORE THE

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON COUNTERTERRORISM, COUNTERINTELLIGENCE, AND
COUNTERPROLIFERATION
PERMANENT SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

AT A HEARING ENTITLED

**“VIOLENT EXTREMISM AND DOMESTIC TERRORISM IN AMERICA:
THE ROLE AND RESPONSE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE”**

PRESENTED

NOVEMBER 3, 2021

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Good morning Chairman Carson, Ranking Member Crawford and members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the FBI’s role in combatting Domestic Terrorism. I am pleased to be here representing the dedicated men and women of the FBI’s Counterterrorism Division.

The nature of the threat posed by terrorism — both international and domestic — continues to evolve. The greatest terrorism threat to our Homeland today is posed by lone actors or small cells who typically radicalize online and look to attack soft targets with easily accessible weapons. Specifically, we see these threats manifested by Domestic Violent Extremists (“DVEs”) and Homegrown Violent Extremists (“HVEs”), both threats that arise in the United States. The FBI describes individuals who seek to commit violent criminal acts in furtherance of social or political goals stemming from domestic influences — such as racial or ethnic bias, or anti-government or anti-authority sentiments — as DVEs whereas HVEs are individuals inspired primarily by foreign terrorist groups, but not receiving individualized direction from those groups.

Both DVEs and HVEs are often motivated by a mix of socio-political, ideological, and personal grievances, and have focused on readily accessible targets to include houses of worship, retail establishments, and mass public gatherings. The vulnerability of these soft targets, the insular nature of the process by which these individuals radicalize and mobilize to violence, the limited discussions they typically have with others regarding their plans, and their use of encrypted communications, pose significant challenges law enforcement’s ability to detect and disrupt these plots before they can cause harm. Some violent extremists have also continued to

target law enforcement and the military, as well as institutions or members of the U.S. Government.

Earlier this year, U.S. intelligence and law enforcement agencies issued a joint assessment concluding that DVEs “pose an elevated threat” in 2021. DVEs espouse a range of animating ideologies. The top threats we face from DVEs are from those we categorize as Racially or Ethnically Motivated Violent Extremists (“RMVEs”) and Anti-Government or Anti-Authority Violent Extremists. While RMVEs who advocate for the superiority of the white race were the primary source of lethal attacks perpetrated by DVEs in 2018 and 2019, Anti-Government or Anti-Authority Violent Extremists — specifically, Militia Violent Extremists (“MVEs”), and Anarchist Violent Extremists (“AVEs”) — were responsible for three of the four lethal DVE attacks in 2020. Notably, this included the first lethal attack committed by an Anarchist Violent Extremist in over 20 years.

Consistent with our mission, the FBI does not open investigations based solely -on First Amendment-protected speech or association, peaceful protests, or political activity or based on an individual’s membership in a protected class, including race, color, religion, and national origin. The FBI holds sacred the rights of individuals to peacefully exercise their First Amendment freedoms. Non-violent protests are signs of a healthy democracy, not an ailing one. Regardless of ideology, the FBI will aggressively pursue those who seek to hijack legitimate First Amendment-protected activity by engaging in violent criminal activity. We will actively pursue the opening of FBI investigations when an individual uses, or threatens the use of, force, violence, or coercion, in violation of federal law and in the furtherance of a social or political goal.

As an organization, the FBI continually adapts and relies heavily on the strength of our federal, State, local, Tribal, territorial, and international partnerships to combat all terrorist threats to the United States and our interests around the world. To that end, we use all available lawful investigative techniques and methods to combat these threats while continuing to collect, analyze, and share intelligence concerning the threat posed by any violent extremist who desires to harm Americans and U.S. interests. The FBI will continue to share intelligence and encourage the sharing of information among our numerous partners via our Joint Terrorism Task Forces and fusion centers across the country, and our legal attaché offices around the world.

Looking forward, the FBI assesses that DVEs pose an elevated threat of violence to the United States, and that some of these actors have been emboldened in the aftermath of the siege on the U.S. Capitol. We assess that RMVEs advocating for the superiority of the white race and Anti-Government or Anti-Authority Violent Extremists, specifically MVEs, present the most lethal threats, with RMVEs most likely to conduct mass-casualty attacks against civilians, and MVEs typically targeting law enforcement and government personnel and facilities. The FBI urges federal, State, local, Tribal, and territorial government counterterrorism and law enforcement officials, private sector partners, and the American public to remain vigilant in light of the persistent threat posed by DVEs in order to effectively detect, prevent, preempt, or respond to domestic violent extremist threats and terrorist attacks in the United States.

Chairman Carson, Ranking Member Crawford, and members of the Subcommittee, I would like to close by thanking you for this opportunity to discuss the threat posed by domestic terrorism.