

Written Testimony of
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Regarding

“Alarming Incidents of White Supremacy in the Military – How to Stop It?”

February 11, 2020

Chairman Speier, Ranking Member Kelly, and esteemed members of the subcommittee, thank you for inviting me to testify. My name is Heidi Beirich. I hold a Ph.D. in political science from Purdue University and am the co-founder of the newly established Global Project Against Hate and Extremism. For two decades prior to the founding of this new organization, while serving as the director of the Southern Poverty Law Center’s Intelligence Project, I and my former colleagues monitored, issued reports about, and trained law enforcement officials on far-right extremist activity in the United States. We also alerted Armed Forces officials when we identified white supremacists and other extremists serving in the military. An important area of that work involved not only monitoring white supremacists in the military, but also arguing for more vigilant practices and stronger policies to root out racist extremists from the ranks. I am an expert on white supremacist movements in the United States, serving as an advisory board member of the International Network for Hate Studies, a co-founder and co-chair of the Change the Terms Coalition, which proposes policy solutions to online extremism, and the author of numerous studies on extremism as well as co-editor of *Neo-Confederacy: A Critical Introduction*. My research has been cited in hundreds of academic pieces and news articles, including on the issue of white supremacists and the military. I am honored to appear before you today.

My testimony will focus on the threat posed by racist extremists in the military and how veterans and currently serving troops have been involved in domestic terrorism and terrorist plots inspired by white supremacy. I will suggest possible policy changes to

current regulations and propose investigations into the functioning of current practices used to separate white supremacists from the military. I will also address the growing international terrorism threat posed by veterans and active duty troops holding these views. My testimony is not intended to minimize other threats to our Armed Forces, including those associated with extremist forms of Islam or gang organizations. It is also not intended to discredit in any way the millions of men and women in our Armed Forces who faithfully serve our country with such dedication. The vast majority of those who serve in our Armed Forces have no connection to white supremacy and uphold our country's deepest values. Those soldiers that are involved in extremist organizations driven by racism, or who express racist and bigoted ideas that are pushed by the white supremacist movement, sully the good name and integrity of our dedicated soldiers, pose a national security threat to our nation and an international security threat when they work with white supremacists in other countries to further these ideas. They also endanger their fellow soldiers and our military's efforts to bring peace and stability to other countries where our troops are stationed.

White Supremacists in the Military: A National Security Threat

Recruitment of active duty military and veterans has been a staple tool of white supremacist groups for decades and many former soldiers have risen to lead violent white supremacist groups in the United States after separating from the service. Military training is seen as vital to the 'coming race war' and to those who are actively working to instigate such violence.

Barring white supremacists from the military is of the utmost importance. A growing white supremacist movement, both in the United States and abroad, is increasingly violent and involved in terrorist attacks that have left dozens dead. Far-right terror is on the rise in the West, bucking the trend of declining rates of terror globally, according to the 2019 Global Terrorism Index.¹ The 2019 index recorded a decline in overall terrorism deaths for the fourth consecutive year, while reporting that far-right terrorism increased by 320 percent in the same time period. In 2018, total deaths globally attributed to far-right groups increased to 26. In the first nine months of 2019, 77 deaths were attributed to the far-right.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in September altered its domestic terrorism strategy to specifically address rising levels of terrorism coming from racial extremists. For the first time since it was formed after the 9/11 attacks, DHS added white supremacist violence to its list of priority threats.² I attended a joint DHS and National Counter Terrorism Center meeting in September where this growing threat and possible

¹<https://www.euronews.com/2019/11/20/far-right-terrorism-on-the-rise-in-the-west-bucking-global-terror-trends>

²https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/19_0920_plcy_strategic-framework-counterterrorism-targeted-violence.pdf

legislative responses to it were discussed. One high level official speaking under Chatham House Rules, who had recently been in Europe where the far right is now seen in many countries as the number one terrorism threat, said at the meeting that “it was a shock to realize, after years of countering the dangerous export of terrorism from countries in the Middle East, that the United States may now be doing the same in its export of white supremacy.”

At the heart of these attacks are former and currently serving members of the military, who have training that makes terrorist attacks more achievable and more deadly. Many Americans remember that Timothy McVeigh, who committed the largest terrorist attack prior to 9/11 in terms of the numbers killed in the Oklahoma City bombing, was a former soldier. The same was true of Eric Rudolph, an antisemite and racist who perpetrated the Olympic Park bombing in 1996. And of Wade Michael Page, who committed a mass shooting at a Sikh Temple in Wisconsin in 2012.

In recent months, several members of a particularly violent neo-Nazi organization, Atomwaffen, have been found to be on active duty while simultaneously spreading their training and ideas to violent white supremacists in the U.S. and other countries. And in just the last few months, active duty white supremacists have been arrested for planning domestic terrorist plots, further evidence that this is an enduring problem that needs constant attention to fulfill the Armed Services commitment to being free of white supremacy and other racist ideologies. These racist soldiers also are a threat to currently serving troops of color, who can be subjected to hate crimes and other forms of abuse by racists, and to civilians in the many areas of the world where our troops serve.

This commitment has been publicly and repeatedly stated by military leaders. After the violent white supremacist protests in Charlottesville, Va., in 2017, which featured both active duty white supremacists and veterans, then Joint Chiefs Chairman General Joseph Dunford said, “there is no place for racism and bigotry in the U.S. military or in the United States as a whole.”³ Then-Secretary of Defense James Mattis said the military is a “widely diverse force” that does not tolerate extremism and hatred.⁴

Even so, it appears that the Armed Forces are falling far short in rooting out extremists, and when they fail to do so, these extremists re-enter civil society trained in how to effectively perpetrate violence. According to New America, 21 military veterans were identified as having committed or attempted an act of violence as a right-wing extremist between 2001 and 2013.⁵ Some of these veterans were radicalized before or

³<https://www.wsj.com/articles/joint-chiefs-chairman-denounces-racism-and-bigotry-after-charlottesville-violence-1502958047>

⁴<https://www.newsweek.com/how-common-white-nationalism-military-congressman-urges-investigation-914430>

⁵<https://psmag.com/social-justice/does-the-american-military-have-a-problem-with-far-right-extremism>

during military service, and others joined the movement after leaving the military. There should be no possibility of such radicalization while active in the Armed Forces.

The Armed Services' own soldiers know that white supremacy in the ranks is a serious problem. A *Military Times* poll in 2017 found that nearly 25 percent of actively serving military personnel have encountered white nationalism and racism in the Armed Forces.⁶ Active duty troops were about 1.3 million at the time, meaning some 325,000 soldiers had encountered white nationalism in some form. Follow up surveys in 2018 and 2019 by the same publication found substantially the same troubling results.⁷

Other evidence of lack of attention to this issue exists in terms of the manner in which hate crimes perpetrated by active-duty troops are reported, or rather not reported. A 2017 report by ProPublica found that the Pentagon was not providing data on hate crimes to the FBI as required by law.⁸ As a result, the level of hate crime that may exist in the Armed Forces is unknown. This is unacceptable and needs to be rectified.

The only concrete evidence the military has provided on the dimensions of this problem is a response to a May 2018 letter written by then-U.S. Rep. Keith Ellison (D-Minn.), who now is the attorney general of Minnesota, to Defense Secretary James Mattis expressing concern about this problem and requesting details on the Pentagon's efforts to rid the ranks of white supremacists.⁹ Replying to Ellison, the Defense Department said that it had received "27 reports of extremist activity (domestic) by Service members over the past five years." Military officials, the letter continued, had investigated 25 of these reports; ultimately, 18 service members from across the military had been disciplined or forced out of the armed forces.¹⁰ The nature of the extremism of the troops in question was not documented.

The low number reported to Ellison in comparison to other evidence about white supremacy in the military indicates that efforts to identify extremism in the ranks are not thorough enough at this time. The low numbers may also relate to an attitude in the Armed Forces that such activity is small and thus not of great importance. In a 2019 *New York Times* report, Carter F. Smith, who served as an Army criminal investigator for 30

⁶<https://www.militarytimes.com/news/pentagon-congress/2017/10/23/military-times-poll-one-in-four-troops-sees-white-nationalism-in-the-ranks/>

⁷<https://www.militarytimes.com/news/pentagon-congress/2019/09/12/lawmakers-want-closer-tracking-of-white-supremacy-nazi-sympathizers-in-the-military/>; <https://news.yahoo.com/signs-white-supremacy-extremism-again-100042578.html>

⁸<https://www.propublica.org/article/more-100-federal-agencies-fail-report-hate-crimes-fbi-national-database>

⁹<https://www.rollcall.com/news/politics/ellison-wants-answers-about-white-supremacy-in-the-military>

¹⁰<https://www.propublica.org/article/an-atomwaffen-member-sketched-a-map-to-take-the-neo-nazis-down-what-path-officials-took-is-a-mystery>

years before joining the faculty of Middle Tennessee State University, was quoted as saying that the military does not make this issue a priority.¹¹

“They always say the numbers are small, and because of that, it is not a priority,” Smith told the *Times*. “Well, the numbers might be small, but they are like a drop of cyanide in your drink. They can do a lot of damage.” Smith also said that the military is required to prepare a report each year on domestic extremists serving, but that it has no law enforcement body to monitor extremist networks or to collect data on the problem. Smith’s conclusion: “So every year they get a report based on what they were never looking for” and the data only includes a small number of cases that arise outside organically because there is no investigatory body dedicated to the problem.

The government should conduct an in-depth investigation of this problem to evaluate the adequacy of the policies and procedures currently in place to tackle it.

On a positive note, a new legal requirement passed last year requiring the Pentagon to revise its command climate surveys of active-duty soldiers to ask whether they have seen “extremist activity” in the workplace may lead to better information on the extent of these problems in the military.¹² Unfortunately, an amendment from the House that was included in the 2020 National Defense Authorization Act mandating the surveys include an examination of white nationalism and white supremacy specifically was stripped by the Senate.¹³ This specific language should nevertheless be included in climate surveys if possible so a more accurate set of data on the problem can be compiled.

White Supremacists in the Military: Recent History

There have been dozens of arrests in recent years of active duty and veteran white supremacists for a variety of crimes including planning and engaging in domestic terrorist attacks and murder.

In January 2020, the FBI arrested three men from the neo-Nazi group, The Base, which is the English translation for Al-Qaeda. The men, who were arrested on charges that range from illegal transport of a machine gun to harboring aliens, had “malicious plans,” according to federal officials, to disrupt a gun rights rally that was held on Jan. 20

¹¹<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/27/us/military-white-nationalists-extremists.html?referringSource=articleShare>

¹²<https://www.militarytimes.com/news/pentagon-congress/2020/02/06/signs-of-white-supremacy-extremism-up-again-in-poll-of-active-duty-troops/>

¹³ <https://www.military.com/daily-news/2020/02/06/lawmaker-wants-more-tools-confront-white-supremacy-military.html>

in Richmond, Va.¹⁴ Two of the men had previous military training: Brian Mark Lemley was a cavalry scout in the Army and Patrik Jordan Mathews previously served as a combat engineer in the Canadian Army Reserve, indicating that the reach of white nationalism is a problem for foreign military services as well. According to court documents, these men discussed “recruitment, creating a white ethno-state, committing acts of violence against minority communities (including African-Americans and Jewish-Americans), the organization’s military-style training camps, and ways to make improvised explosive devices.”¹⁵ Other members of the group were arrested at around the same time for a plot to murder a couple involved in anti-racist activities in Georgia. Notably, the founder of The Base, Rinaldo Nizzaro, lives in Russia, furthering the international dimension of this case.¹⁶

Perhaps the best-known recent example of extremists in the military was disclosed in February 2019, when Coast Guard Lieutenant Christopher Hasson was arrested. A former active-duty Marine and member of the Army Guard, Hasson was found to be plotting a mass murder of elected officials of the Democratic party and media figures.¹⁷ After seizing his computer and other electronic devices, investigators found evidence that Hasson was a long-time white supremacist who held violently racist views even before his first enlistment in the military. He was sentenced last month to 13 years in prison.

There were many similar cases in 2019. In April, Master Sergeant Cory Reeves was identified as a member of the white supremacist group Identity Evropa. He was only demoted one rank after an initial investigation. In December, proceedings into his activities opened with the possibility of discharge.¹⁸ He remains employed by the Air Force. In September, the FBI arrested Jarrett William Smith, a soldier stationed at Fort Riley, Kansas, and charged him with providing expertise to extremists that could lead to the creation of explosives and weapons of mass destruction.¹⁹ He was interacting with a member of a neo-fascist Ukrainian group, the Right Sector, and was interested in fighting in Ukraine. The FBI said Smith discussed in an online chat a plan to conduct an attack within the United States. Smith was reportedly searching for more “radicals” like himself and discussed killing members of an anti-fascist network as well as destroying cell towers or a local news station. Later he suggested a major American news network as a target of a vehicle bomb. In December, two men were kicked out of the Georgia National Guard after they were reported to be leaders of the racist pagan group, Ravensblood Kindred,

¹⁴<https://www.npr.org/2020/01/16/797041211/fbi-arrests-3-alleged-members-of-white-supremacist-group-ahead-of-richmond-rally>

¹⁵<https://apps.npr.org/documents/document.html?id=6658688-The-Base-Lemley-Mathews-Bilbrough-Arrests>

¹⁶<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-51236915>

¹⁷<https://www.nbcnews.com/think/opinion/inside-u-s-military-s-battle-white-supremacy-far-right-ncna1010221>

¹⁸<https://www.denverpost.com/2019/12/17/air-force-identity-evropa-cory-reeves/>

¹⁹<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/23/us/us-army-soldier-arrested-Jarrett-William-Smith.html>

part of the larger white supremacist Asatru Folk Assembly.²⁰ According to press reports, the men had attended a speaking event by white nationalist Richard Spencer in 2017, and one of them was on active duty in Afghanistan when his ties to white supremacy were disclosed.

In November 2019, when the chat logs for Iron March, a neo-fascist, antisemitic and racist forum run by a Russian national, were leaked, active duty military were found to be participating.²¹ Iron March ultimately birthed Atomwaffen, a violent neo-Nazi organization whose members are connected to multiple murders and terrorism plots. On Iron March, an anonymous poster identified himself as part of the Marine Naval Reserve Officers Training Corps and asked about Atomwaffen. Another poster claimed to be in the Navy and wrote, “Be careful if you get deployed with those [deleted] sand [deleted] and jews... They are all a bunch of slippery pieces of [deleted] that wash their faces in rain puddles in dirt on the ground.”²² In other posts, an artilleryman outlined his background and political views in response to questions posed by the co-founder of the British neo-Nazi group National Action, who served as an administrator on Iron March. The organization has been banned in Britain as a terrorist organization, the first since WWII.²³

Also in 2019, the *Huffington Post* exposed seven members of the U.S. military actively posting on a Discord chatroom as part of the white nationalist organization Identity Evropa.²⁴ They included two Marines, two Army ROTC cadets, an Army physician, a member of the Texas National Guard and one member of the Air Force.

It is unlikely that this is anywhere near a comprehensive list of white supremacists on active duty or in the National Guard, and it is instructive that many of these cases were exposed by entities other than the military or federal officials. It is unclear how many such investigations the military itself has undertaken, other than the data given to former Rep. Ellison. It’s hard to know the true extent of the problem of white supremacists in the military since there is no specific requirement for the Pentagon to collect data on those expelled for white supremacist activity, to disclose the number of such investigations, or anything else related to this problem. The lack of transparency is a serious problem in itself because providing white supremacists with training on weapons, bombs, and

²⁰<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/2-men-kicked-out-national-guard-over-alleged-white-supremacist-n1107591>

²¹<https://www.militarytimes.com/news/your-army/2019/11/07/desire-to-join-military-large-focus-of-leaked-chats-in-infamous-neo-nazi-forum/>

²²<https://arstechnica.com/information-technology/2019/11/massive-data-dump-exposes-members-of-website-for-violent-white-supremacists/>

²³<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/dec/12/neo-nazi-group-national-action-banned-by-uk-home-secretary>

²⁴https://www.huffpost.com/entry/white-nationalists-military-identity-evropa_n_5c8ab70ae4b0d7f6b0f1094b

strategies for pursuing lethal attacks makes them potentially deadly to the American public and a serious national and international security threat.

The Atomwaffen Division: A Case Study in Failing to Root Out Extremism

In 2018, Marine Lance Corporal Vasillios G. Pistolis, was expelled from the Marine Corps for his ties to the neo-Nazi Atomwaffen Division (AWD). He was removed after participating in the Charlottesville riots in 2017, where he was engaged in violent assaults. Pistolis later bragged about his involvement online with other members of AWD.²⁵ This group, whose name in German means nuclear weapons, would ultimately have members involved in multiple U.S. murders, planning terrorist attacks, and the creation of a hit list and sending death threats to German politicians it targeted for assassination. AWD has international reach, with chapters in England, Canada, Germany and the Baltic states.

Pistolis's expulsion was widely reported, but the details of the arrest of the leader of the group, Brandon Russell, are much less widely known and paint a troubling picture of how the military handles white supremacists in its ranks. A lengthy ProPublica report provided the details.²⁶ In 2017, Russell was arrested after one of his roommates, Devon Arthurs, killed two of his other roommates in a Tampa apartment. Investigators on the scene discovered a cache of weapons, detonators and volatile chemical compounds, including a cooler full of HMTD, a powerful explosive often used by bombmakers, and ammonium nitrate, the substance used by McVeigh in the Oklahoma City attack. Russell was also in possession of two radioactive isotopes, americium and thorium.

At the time of his arrest, Russell had been serving in the 53rd Brigade Special Troops Battalion of Florida's Army National Guard. Arthurs told investigators after his arrest that Russell had signed up for the Guard in part to receive combat training he might put to use for AWD. Russell had been drilling with the 53rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team on the day of the murders. In his own interview with Tampa police, Russell said he expected his unit to be deployed in 2018 and was considering the Army as a career.

While Arthurs was rightly taken to jail and booked on homicide charges, police and FBI agents released Russell, who claimed that he used the explosives to power model rockets. An officer even drove Russell back to the murder scene to get his car. Within hours, Russell acquired an AR-15-style assault rifle and a bolt-action hunting rifle. He loaded homemade body armor and more than 1,000 rounds of ammunition into his car and headed to the Florida Keys with another AWD member. Sheriff's deputies in Monroe

²⁵<https://www.marinecorpstimes.com/news/your-marine-corps/2018/08/01/marine-with-alleged-neo-nazi-connections-booted-from-the-marine-corps/>

²⁶Most of the details in regards to this case come from this story: <https://www.propublica.org/article/an-atomwaffen-member-sketched-a-map-to-take-the-neo-nazis-down-what-path-officials-took-is-a-mystery>. ProPublica in collaboration with Frontline did the most thorough reporting on this case and the military response to the events.

County ultimately arrested him and were stunned by the weapons and ammunition in his car. There was no luggage in the vehicle. In September 2017, Russell pleaded guilty to a single charge of unlawful possession of explosives and was later sentenced to five years in federal prison.

After Russell's arrest, the Florida Guard mounted an investigation into his activities while in uniform. Just three weeks after Russell was jailed, the Guard wrapped up its inquiry and issued a report. This listed a few red flags in regards to Russell: that he had a tattoo of the Atomwaffen logo on his right shoulder, two of his superiors had warned him about his conduct after he repeatedly "vocalized his hatred for homosexuality and 'faggots,'" and Russell had "seemed very anxious to receive body armor, and keep his military issued gear."²⁷

The investigation concluded that Russell had not sought to recruit other soldiers for AWD, and that he "did not present consistent characteristics that would have led a reasonable person to suspect Russell held such radical beliefs." Investigators determined there had been no negligence in allowing Russell into the Guard or in his continued presence in its ranks. Perhaps most troubling when it comes to the process of identifying white supremacist recruits, the investigator on the case noted that the U.S. military did not maintain a database of tattoos that might have been used to screen for troubling affiliations.

The two-page summary of the investigation, obtained by ProPublica and Frontline, contained no references to Arthurs' statements to authorities about other possible AWD members in the military. It also did not contain any evidence that the Guard had alerted officials in other military branches to the potential presence of AWD members. The Pentagon did not respond to repeated requests from ProPublica and Frontline to discuss Atomwaffen and its possible recruitment of current or former military members.

In a statement, a Pentagon spokeswoman, Major Carla Gleason of the Air Force, said: "The DoD uses a multi-level approach to learn as much as possible about potential new soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines so we can assess whether they should be extended the privilege to serve in the military. While we can't guarantee that every person who enters the service will be free from holding extremist thoughts, various screening tools provide us the best opportunity to identify those who do not share our values."

This story is highly concerning on multiple levels. It shows a lack of coordination among military branches and with Guard units about investigating possible Atomwaffen members in the ranks, a lack of interest about claims that Russell may have been recruiting other individuals into the group, and discloses the fact that there is no tattoo database being used to screen out extremists. The biggest concern is the finding that the

²⁷<https://www.propublica.org/article/an-atomwaffen-member-sketched-a-map-to-take-the-neo-nazis-down-what-path-officials-took-is-a-mystery>

Florida Army National Guard was not negligent in failing to recognize Russell as a potential threat.

Unfortunately, these stories are far from isolated events. Here are more examples of extremists found in the ranks in recent years:

- A 2014 Vice News video report showed the KKK was actively seeking to recruit U.S. military veterans, and a few were answering their call.²⁸
- In 2013, John Charles Stortstrom, a mechanical engineer who worked for the Army at its Edgewood Chemical Biological Center (ECBC) in Maryland, was suspended after published reports disclosed that he was among 150 white nationalists who attended a conference of the white nationalist American Renaissance, a race science outfit. American Renaissance included a photo on its website of Stortstrom with the caption, “Engineer. Republican. Racist. Military bomb maker.”²⁹
- In 2012, a member of the Missouri National Guard was arrested for running and supplying weapons to a neo-Nazi paramilitary training camp in Florida.³⁰ Two other soldiers were arrested after murdering a former soldier and his girlfriend in an attempt to cover up their assassination plot against then-President Barack Obama.³¹ Also in 2012, a Marine Corps scout sniper team in Afghanistan posed with a Nazi SS flag.³²
- In 2009, Marine Lance Corporal Kody Brittingham, stationed at Camp Lejeune, N.C., was arrested on an armed robbery charge. A search of his barracks turned up a journal containing white supremacist material and a plan to kill Obama.³³
- Also in 2009, the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) reported on leaked private emails of the neo-Nazi National Socialist Movement (NSM). The emails showed that several people who identified themselves as active military personnel contacted NSM over the prior two years to express interest in the organization, including at least one soldier who subsequently joined.³⁴

²⁸<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nXIYQxMN9-4>

²⁹<https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2013/07/08/after-hatewatch-story-maryland-military-engineer-suspended>

³⁰<https://theweek.com/articles/833960/american-militarys-extremist-problem>

³¹<https://psmag.com/social-justice/does-the-american-military-have-a-problem-with-far-right-extremism>

³²<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/feb/09/us-military-marines-nazi-ss-flag-photo>

³³https://www.journalnow.com/news/local/former-lejeune-marine-charged-with-threatening-obama/article_0c645db5-0529-53ad-aeee-e1ed3f7cf96b.html

³⁴<https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2009/09/03/leaked-neo-nazi-e-mails-show-contacts-military-personnel>

- In 2008, the SPLC issued a report revealing that 46 members of the neo-Nazi web forum New Saxon had identified themselves as active-duty military personnel. It quoted a racist skinhead who wrote that he had joined the Army and specifically requested an assignment where he would be able to learn how to make an explosive device.³⁵
- In 2007, two Army privates in the 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg, N.C., received six-year prison sentences for attempting to sell body armor and morphine to an undercover FBI agent they believed was involved in the white supremacist movement.³⁶
- In 2006, an SPLC report showed that a number of military personnel had joined racist and neo-Nazi groups such as the Fourth Reich, Aryan Nation, National Alliance, National Socialist Movement, and others.³⁷
- Also in 2006, the leader of the Celtic Knights planned to obtain firearms and explosives from an active-duty Army soldier in Fort Hood, Texas. The soldier, who served in Iraq in 2006 and 2007, was a member of the National Alliance, a neo-Nazi group.³⁸
- In 2003, the U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Division advised the FBI of six active-duty soldiers at Fort Riley, Texas, who were affiliated with the Aryan Nations. One was the neo-Nazi group's point of contact in Kansas and sought to recruit members from within the military.³⁹

Again, these cases are by no means exhaustive.

White Supremacy & the Military: A Well-Documented Problem

³⁵<https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2008/evidence-shows-racist-skinheads-enlisting-military>

³⁶<https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2008/fbi-reports-extremists-military>

³⁷<https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2006/several-high-profile-racist-extremists-serve-us-military>

³⁸<https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2008/evidence-shows-racist-skinheads-enlisting-military>

³⁹<https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2008/fbi-reports-extremists-military>

Active military personnel are well aware of this problem and polling by the *Military Times* in 2017⁴⁰, 2018⁴¹ and 2019⁴², indicates that white nationalist views appeared widespread. In the 2019 poll released on February 6, 2020, the publication reported that more than one-third of all active-duty troops and more than half of minority service members say they have personally witnessed examples of “white nationalism or ideologically-driven racism within the ranks.” The poll surveyed 1,630 active-duty troops. As in prior years, troops responding to the poll indicated white nationalism is a greater security threat than extremist strains of Islam or other threats. Poll participants reported witnessing racist language, swastikas drawn on service members’ cars, tattoos affiliated with white supremacist groups, stickers supporting the Klan and Nazi-style salutes.

In the *Military Times*’ 2018 poll, which included responses from nearly 900 active-duty troops, 22 percent of service members who participated said they had seen signs of white nationalism or racist ideology within the armed forces. Among minority service members polled, incidents of racism and racist ideology increased from 42 percent in 2017 to more than half those surveyed in 2018. Respondents cited casual use of racial slurs and antisemitic language, display of the Confederate flag despite complaints from other troops, swastikas drawn in bathrooms in combat zones, and tattoos known to be connected with white supremacy. It should be noted that were this behavior to occur in a civilian workplace, such incidents would be seen as contributing to a hostile workplace environment. The paper reported that an anonymous service member wrote, “I have several colleagues who have said they are ‘alt-right,’ and that they had made, “very clear statements of strong hatred against blacks, Muslims, Hispanics and immigrants in general. They punish others by withholding favorable assignments, actions, etc.”

In their 2017 poll, *Military Times* found that concerns about white nationalist groups and beliefs were reported by about a quarter of those responding. This view was more pronounced among minorities. Nearly 42 percent of non-white troops who responded to the survey said they had personally experienced examples of white nationalism in the military, versus about 18 percent of white service members. Respondents cited white nationalists as a bigger threat to national security than those emanating from Syria and Iraq.

The 2017 poll revealed other disturbing data. Some respondents seemed blasé about the problem. “White nationalism is not a terrorist organization,” wrote one Navy

⁴⁰<https://www.militarytimes.com/news/pentagon-congress/2017/10/23/military-times-poll-one-in-four-troops-sees-white-nationalism-in-the-ranks/>

⁴¹<https://www.militarytimes.com/news/pentagon-congress/2019/02/28/white-nationalism-remains-a-problem-for-the-military-poll-shows/>

⁴²<https://www.militarytimes.com/news/pentagon-congress/2020/02/06/signs-of-white-supremacy-extremism-up-again-in-poll-of-active-duty-troops/>

commander, who declined to give his name. “You do realize white nationalists and racists are two totally different types of people?” wrote another anonymous Air Force staff sergeant.

Federal agencies have also documented this problem. In 2008, the FBI published “White Supremacist Recruitment of Military Personnel since 9/11.”⁴³ The report detailed more than a dozen investigative findings and criminal cases involving veterans and active duty personnel engaging in extremist activity and found just over 200 identifiable neo-Nazis with military training. A 2009 Department of Homeland Security (DHS) report further warned that the combination of the election of the first African American president, a downturn in the economy, and an influx of unemployed vets returning from combat in Iraq and Afghanistan were potential flashpoints, and that military personnel and veterans were being targeted by far-right extremist groups.⁴⁴ Unfortunately, this report created a political firestorm among politicians, conservative commentators and veterans groups. As a result, it was rescinded by DHS Secretary Janet Napolitano, and the Obama administration subsequently did little to address the issue.

Military Regulations and White Supremacy: An Uneven Response to the Seriousness of the Problem

Dealing with the issue of white supremacy in the ranks has long been a work in progress. As cases of extremism come to light, the military often tightens regulations after refusing for a period of time to admit the seriousness of the problem. There have been rounds of reforms over recent decades, and bipartisan support to fight this problem. But recent cases of extremists make clear that the current policies, resources and investigative priorities are not strong enough to root out a growing problem that is contributing to domestic terrorism, and, increasingly, international terrorism inspired by white supremacy.

In 1986, the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) wrote to then-Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger to turn over evidence that active-duty Marines stationed at Camp Lejeune in North Carolina were providing equipment and paramilitary training to a violent Ku Klux Klan group.⁴⁵ Weinberger responded by issuing a directive stating that military personnel must “reject participation in white supremacy, neo-Nazi and other such groups which espouse or attempt to create overt discrimination.” Unfortunately, many commanders interpreted that order to mean that while active participation in extremist groups was prohibited, so-called “passive support,” such as distributing propaganda, listening to hate rock, and “mere membership” were still allowed. In 1995, after racist murders were perpetrated by soldiers serving at Fort Bragg, the Pentagon

⁴³<https://documents.law.yale.edu/sites/default/files/White%20Supremacist%20Recruitment%20of%20Military%20Personnel%20Since%209-11-ocr.pdf>

⁴⁴<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/01/us/politics/white-supremacy-homeland-security.html>

⁴⁵<https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2012/extremists-military-longstanding-problem>

toughened military policy again to read, “Engaging in activities in relation to [extremist] organizations, or in furtherance of the objectives of such organizations that are viewed by command to be detrimental to the good order of the unit is incompatible with Military Service, and is, therefore, prohibited.”⁴⁶

Then-Defense Secretary William Perry used even stronger language to describe the intent of the updated regulation. “Department of Defense policy leaves no room for racist and extremist activities in the military,” Perry stated. “We must -- and we shall -- make every effort to erase bigotry, racism, and extremism from the military. Extremist activity compromises fairness, good order, and discipline. The armed forces, which defend the nation and its values, must exemplify those values beyond question.”⁴⁷

In 2006, the SPLC revealed that large numbers of neo-Nazis had infiltrated the ranks.⁴⁸ The report blamed relaxed wartime recruiting standards and ambiguous regulations. It quoted a military investigator who said he had identified and submitted evidence on 320 extremists at Fort Lewis in Washington state but that only two had been discharged.⁴⁹ It also cited the case of Matt Buschbacher, a Navy SEAL who attended the 2002 leadership conference of the neo-Nazi National Alliance while on active duty. The SPLC alerted military officials to Buschbacher’s activities, but he was allowed to complete a tour of duty in Iraq and given an honorable discharge.

The SPLC, along with 40 members of Congress, urged then-Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld to adopt a “zero tolerance” policy toward white supremacists. But the Pentagon did nothing.⁵⁰ Two years later, in 2008, the SPLC issued a new report revealing that 46 members of the neo-Nazi web forum New Saxon had identified themselves as active-duty military personnel.⁵¹ Again, the Pentagon denied there was a problem and refused to act.

With no apparent action being taken by the Pentagon, in July 2009 the SPLC appealed to Congress to investigate. In a letter to committee chairmen with oversight over homeland security and the armed services, the SPLC presented dozens of additional profiles of active-duty military personnel on the neo-Nazi New Saxon forum.⁵² Those profiles included an individual who wrote that he was about to be deployed with the Air Force overseas and was looking forward to “killing all the bloody sand n*****!”

⁴⁶<https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2012/extremists-military-longstanding-problem>

⁴⁷<https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2006/several-high-profile-racist-extremists-serve-us-military>

⁴⁸<https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2006/several-high-profile-racist-extremists-serve-us-military>

⁴⁹<https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2012/extremists-military-longstanding-problem>

⁵⁰<https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2012/extremists-military-longstanding-problem>

⁵¹<https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2008/evidence-shows-racist-skinheads-enlisting-military>

⁵²<https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2010/04/13/pentagon-tightens-ban-supremacist-activity-after-years-denying-problem>

Another proclaimed Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf* as one of his favorite books. Many of the profiles included pictures of the posters in military uniform.

After arguing for some time that its “zero-tolerance” policy had been sufficient to keep white supremacists out of the military, in 2009 the military quietly altered its regulations to state that military personnel “must not actively advocate supremacist doctrine, ideology or causes” or “otherwise advance efforts to deprive individuals of their civil rights.” The new rules specified that “active participation” would now include activities such as recruiting, fundraising, demonstrating or rallying, training, organizing and distributing supremacist material, including online posts.⁵³

Even with these tightened regulations, many gaps persist particularly in terms of the priority given to these types of investigations and the willingness of unit commanders to take the problem seriously. In an interview with ProPublica and Frontline in 2018, a former Marine then working for a government intelligence agency said that the military's seriousness about combating white supremacists in its ranks can vary.⁵⁴ “At the command level — and publicly — the military takes any extremism seriously,” the ex-Marine said. “There is a zero-tolerance policy regarding Nazis. We defeated them in World War II, and they have no business currently serving in the U.S. military.” But he added, “At the unit level, I believe there's a willful ignorance...’If neo-Nazis aren't allowed to enlist in the military, and if nobody I know is a neo-Nazi, there must not be any within my unit’ seems to be the standard. It's difficult to take seriously that which you don't believe exists.”

For their reporting, ProPublica and Frontline interviewed more than 20 officials with direct knowledge of the military's handling of felony-level criminal investigations. Most said racial extremists were a low priority for military police and detectives in military law enforcement units like the Army Criminal Investigation Division and the Naval Criminal Investigative Service, which polices the Navy and Marine Corps. Military investigators are more focused on street gangs operating within the armed forces, sexual assault and illegal drugs, the officials said.⁵⁵

A concrete example of placing such issues as low priority involves AWD. Roughly a year after the group's founder Brandon Russell's 2018 arrest in Tampa, an Army investigator told ProPublica and Frontline that the Army's CID unit had not opened an investigation into Russell and his neo-Nazi organization. Several military

⁵³<https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2010/04/13/pentagon-tightens-ban-supremacist-activity-after-years-denying-problem>; <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2010/pentagon-stiffens-regulations-ban-racist-advocacy>

⁵⁴<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/ranks-of-notorious-hate-group-include-active-duty-military/>

⁵⁵<https://www.propublica.org/article/an-atomwaffen-member-sketched-a-map-to-take-the-neo-nazis-down-what-path-officials-took-is-a-mystery>

officials said Army CID had no jurisdiction in Russell’s case because he was a member of the Florida Guard and not an active-duty soldier.

This lack of appropriate priorities at the unit level and within the military’s investigative arms may explain why the Department of Defense found such a low number of extremists—only 27 reports in five years--in the ranks per its letter to then-Rep. Ellison.

On a related point, the military, like all federal agencies, is required to provide information on hate crimes to the FBI. Data on these crimes could help officials to understand the racial climate and threats to minority troops posed by racist soldiers. A 2017 report by ProPublica found that the Department of Defense was not providing the data, as required by law, to the FBI.⁵⁶ In fact, ProPublica found that no criminal data of any kind was being shared. ProPublica noted that in 2014 an internal probe by the Pentagon found that the “DoD is not reporting criminal incident data to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) for including in the annual Uniform Crime Reports.” When ProPublica asked for clarification of this issue in 2017, a Pentagon spokesman told the publication, “We have no additional information at this time.”

Rooting out White Supremacy in the Ranks: Recommendations for Stronger Measures

The need to forcefully speak out against white supremacy

There has long been bipartisan consensus that allowing white supremacists in the military is unacceptable and dangerous to the American public the Armed Forces are sworn to protect. As Republican Senator Richard Shelby (R-Ala.) wrote in a letter to the Pentagon in 2006, “Military extremists present an elevated threat both to their fellow servicemembers and the public. We witnessed with Timothy McVeigh that today’s racist extremist may become tomorrow’s domestic terrorist. Of all the institutions in our society, the U.S. military is the absolute last place extremists can be permitted to exist.”⁵⁷

In recent years, this same sentiment has been stated publicly by secretaries of defense and other high-level defense and national security officials, some quoted here. But concerns about the danger of white nationalism have been downplayed by our Commander-in-Chief and the head of the Armed Forces, President Donald Trump. In an interview after the massacre at two mosques in New Zealand in 2019 by a white supremacist, President Trump was asked if he saw an increase globally in the threat of white nationalism. He replied, “I don’t really. I think it’s a small group of people that

⁵⁶<https://www.propublica.org/article/more-100-federal-agencies-fail-report-hate-crimes-fbi-national-database>

⁵⁷<https://www.splcenter.org/news/2006/07/21/sen-shelby-asks-rumsfeld-oust-racist-extremists-military>

have very, very serious problems. I guess, if you look at what happened in New Zealand, perhaps that's a case. I don't know enough about it yet."⁵⁸

It is imperative that President Trump join with his military commanders and speak out forcefully in support of regulations to screen out or expel white supremacists from the military. Having the Commander-in-Chief reiterate this point will resonate down the ranks and highlight the importance of keeping extremists out of the military. The Congress has already demanded that Trump be forceful on this point in the bipartisan, unanimous resolution passed by Congress in 2017 after the deadly Charlottesville racist riots that condemned "White nationalism, White Supremacy, and neo-Nazism as hateful expressions of intolerance that are contradictory to the values that define the people of the United States." The resolution required the president and his administration "use all resources available to the President and the President's cabinet to address the growing prevalence of those hate groups in the United States." Using all resources available to root out white supremacy from the Armed Forces is of the utmost importance for any Administration.

Given the Charlottesville resolution, it was unfortunate that the Senate cut out a reference to "white nationalism" from a measure in this year's National Defense Authorization Act. The military spending bill had included a House provision which was intended to explicitly address the threat of white nationalists in the military and included a section devoted to assessing the extent of this problem in the Armed Forces through climate surveys. The final version of the bill, passed by the Senate and sent to President Donald Trump for his signature, only required the Department of Defense to monitor for "extremist and gang-related activity," rather than specifically referencing white nationalism.

Need for stronger screening measures

As the Atomwaffen case illustrates, the military still does not have strong enough screening mechanisms for recruits. There is no tattoo database to draw on, which is an absolute must. And there are no clearly laid out mechanisms to investigate the social media accounts of prospective recruits. As much evidence as there is today in the public domain about an individual's online extremism, this is a likely avenue for exploration in terms of tightening up recruiting policies and ensuring an environment free of white supremacy once individuals join the service.

In this context, it is important to note that military personnel do not have the same free speech rights as civilians, military courts have ruled. "(A) lower standard for dangerous speech unprotected by the First Amendment pertains in the military context," the military's highest court ruled in 2008, "where dangerous speech is that speech that

⁵⁸<https://time.com/5552850/donald-trump-white-nationalism-global-threat-new-zealand/>

interferes with or prevents the orderly accomplishment of the mission or presents a clear danger to loyalty, discipline, mission or morale of the troops.”⁵⁹

Given that social media accounts are now requested by DHS for visa and other immigration applications from individuals who are highly unlikely to pose a threat to the country, a policy that my new project does not support, surely such an accounting would be in order for those enlisting in the armed services where the threat of white supremacy to our national security and our fellow citizens is far higher. Additionally, it may be wise to consider how the online activities of active duty troops are monitored. The Hassan case, which could have led to murders or a major terrorist attack had he not been caught, reminds us that the trail to such attacks usually is found online.

Currently, military recruits are required to undergo psychological and health tests and fill out a lengthy questionnaire that asks whether they’ve ever been a member of an organization “dedicated to terrorism,” one that advocates for violence, or commits violence with the goal of discouraging others from exercising their constitutional rights. Unfortunately, this process relies heavily on self-reporting and it is unclear how that self-reporting is verified if at all. Also, members of white supremacist groups may not view their activity as related to terrorism, which could undermine the intent of the question in the first place. The nature of the tests that are given should be examined to evaluate whether they are uncovering views related to white supremacy.

In terms of recruitment policies, Capt. Joseph Butterfield, a communications officer at Marine Corps headquarters told Vice News, they have a “multi-layered policy-based approach to screening new and potential Marines for aberrant thinking and behavior.”⁶⁰ Prospective recruits undergo several one-on-one interviews with officers at different levels of command. Their tattoos are “screened for content to ensure it is not indicative of a gang or extremist affiliation.” Finally, recruits and candidates are observed by a team of drill instructors, Butterfield said. These procedures, too, should be investigated for effectiveness. Given that the military appears to have no internal database on tattoos, this may be an ineffective enterprise depending on how those evaluating tattoos are trained.

Need for more rigorous enforcement procedures and the collection of data on how enforcement is applied

⁵⁹<https://www.stripes.com/news/neo-nazis-excluded-from-military-service-by-policy-but-concerns-persist-1.483558>

⁶⁰https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/d3aq8a/exclusive-a-us-marine-used-the-neo-nazi-site-iron-march-to-recruit-for-a-race-war

One problem with the current regulations is that penalties are left largely up to commanders, usually at the unit level, and can include a range of outcomes, such as reprimand, loss of security clearance or discharge from service. For example, Navy reservist Jack Posobiec, who pushed the Pizzagate conspiracy that prominent democrats were running a child sex ring from a pizza parlor in Washington, D.C., only had his security clearance stripped after making light of the Charlottesville violence in 2017.⁶¹ This example shows how there is far too much flexibility in outcomes. And the lack of documented evidence of the problem, which could help identify trends and squash the rise of white supremacists in the military, is an additional problem.

A similar issue is found in the Marine Corps--and likely across the services though there is little in the public domain about this issue. Yvonne Carlock, a spokeswoman with Marine Corps Manpower and Reserve Affairs, told *Marine Corps Times* in 2019 that there is no separation code that allows the Marines to track the number of people expelled for ties to white supremacist groups. That is because Marines are often removed for failure to abide by a regulation, and there is no requirement to record whether removal was related to white supremacy. The nature of the data then makes it difficult to know exactly how entrenched the problem is. Even more problematic is that unit commanders are not required to bring these problems to the attention of the chain of command. "Commanders and Marines alike have the responsibility and opportunity to bring allegations of misconduct to the attention of their chain of command and/or law enforcement personnel for proper investigation and disposition," Carlock said.⁶² But that is voluntary. It should be mandatory.

At this point, military regulations provide that groups that advocate for "illegal discrimination based on race, creed, color, sex, religion, ethnicity or national origin" are forbidden to be military troops. So are groups that advocate "the use of force, violence or criminal activity or otherwise advance efforts to deprive individuals of their civil rights." Active participation includes fundraising, demonstrating, rallying, recruiting, training, organizing or leading members, distributing material, including posting online, and having tattoos associated with such gangs or organizations, according to Lt. Col. Paul Haverstick, a Defense Department spokesman.⁶³

These regulations are strong, but if they are not enforced in a systematic manner, then they only serve as paper tigers. An investigation of how enforcement works in the military and the priority it is given by investigators and unit commanders is advised to determine the effectiveness of these regulations.

⁶¹<https://www.militarytimes.com/2017/08/17/navy-strips-security-clearance-from-officer-who-tweeted-about-charlottesville/>

⁶²<https://www.marinecorpstimes.com/news/your-marine-corps/2019/09/04/the-neo-nazi-boot-inside-one-marines-descent-into-extremism/>

⁶³<https://www.stripes.com/news/neo-nazis-excluded-from-military-service-by-policy-but-concerns-persist-1.483558>

Need for mandatory reporting on the extent of white supremacy in the military

In January, when the Senate cut the phrase “white nationalist” from the National Defense Authorization Act, it also cut out an opportunity to be more proactive on this problem. The phrase was included in an amendment introduced by Rep. Aguilar (D-Calif.) in response to reports such as those included in this testimony about the rising tide of white nationalists in the military. The House of Representatives approved the amendment, which required the secretary of defense to “study the feasibility” of screening for “individuals with ties to white nationalist organizations.”⁶⁴

Rep. Aguilar said in a statement to CNN, “We know that white nationalist extremists are actively trying to enlist in our military, and we know they are doing so to acquire combat and weapons training.” The original amendment rightly created a mandate for military officials to more closely track and respond to incidents of white supremacy in the ranks, a mandate that should be revived. The provision also required the defense secretary to submit a report to Congress on any violations regarding Defense Department policies on “white supremacist, neo-Nazi, terrorist, gang and other extremist affiliations by service members and recruits.” This idea, too, should be revived. Now the law only requires the Pentagon to study ways to screen military enlistees for “extremist and gang-related activity.”⁶⁵

The decision to strip the requirements in this amendment from the Defense Authorization bill should be reconsidered. Although there may never be a fail-safe system that prevents extremists from infiltrating the military, a thorough review of the existing safeguards is long overdue.

The production and scope of the mandatory yearly report mentioned in a 2019 story in the *New York Times* by a former Army criminal investigator should also be investigated.⁶⁶ If it is true that the Pentagon has no law enforcement task force or assigned bodies in each branch to monitor extremists networks and generate data on the problem, that needs to be addressed.

Need for reconsideration of loopholes for other kinds of extremists in current regulations

Unfortunately for investigators, expelling members of certain extremist groups—especially those currently in the U.S. military—is not necessarily possible under the current regulations. White supremacy is clearly proscribed but organized anti-government militia activity is not. As Daryl Johnson, an expert on these movements and the former head of the DHS’s right-wing extremism unit has pointed out, when it comes to anti-

⁶⁴<https://www.cnn.com/2019/12/19/politics/us-military-white-nationalist-ndaa/index.html>

⁶⁵https://www.huffpost.com/entry/senate-removes-white-nationalists-from-military-bill-aimed-at-screening-for-extremists_n_5dfab39be4b0eb2264d3a18d

⁶⁶<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/27/us/military-white-nationalists-extremists.html?referringSource=articleShare>

government militias, the military is “more proactive about white supremacy, especially after Charlottesville...but for anti-government groups and militias, there’s no department policy that prohibits being a member of those groups.”⁶⁷ These groups often push strands of hatred in particular towards Muslims and immigrants⁶⁸ and can be just as dangerous as white supremacists for minority populations, including engaging in targeted attacks against them. They also often advocate for the overthrow of the federal government and members of such organizations have been arrested for involvement in plots designed for just such a purpose. Additionally, militia figures and groups have taken part in white supremacist events, including the Charlottesville riots. We should remember that McVeigh was not just interested in white supremacy, he had also attended militia events. Given that anti-government organizations can have thousands of members and actively recruit from the Armed Forces, an investigation into this loophole is merited.

Need to work more closely with other federal agencies in tracking extremism

It is unclear how the military shares information on extremists with other branches and other federal agencies, including the FBI. When the services become aware of an extremist in their ranks, what happens to that information after that soldier is dismissed? How do the services alert each other when they find someone enlisted with extremist views? How do they investigate the networks in the military that the white supremacist may have been involved in or recruited from? How do the branches and investigative services share information white supremacists? A look at how the services interact with and share information with each other on extremists and with the FBI and Department of Justice once the service member leaves the military is warranted.

Need for the military to fulfill its legal requirement to track and report hate crimes data to the FBI

The Armed Forces are required by law to provide data on the number of hate crimes committed by service members to the FBI. They have not complied with that mandate and the Pentagon should be required to do so. It may be advisable to examine how hate crimes cases are prioritized and handled in the military as well.

An examination of the international impact of white supremacy in the U.S. military

⁶⁷<https://psmag.com/social-justice/does-the-american-military-have-a-problem-with-far-right-extremism>

⁶⁸There are dozens and dozens of examples to back up these points. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2019/jun/24/anti-immigrant-militia-member-arrested--impersonating-us-border-patrol>; <https://www.nbcnews.com/think/opinion/u-s-mexico-border-isn-t-protected-militias-it-s-ncna997056>; <https://psmag.com/news/armed-militias-on-the-border-have-a-long-and-often-racist-history>; <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2019/04/19/stalking-mosques-and-trading-information-back-woods-survivalist-squad-merges-anti-islam>

There is some evidence that the existence of extremists in the ranks is also an international problem and a contributor to terrorism abroad. As the Soufan Center has documented, members of two of America's most violent neo-Nazi groups, the Atomwaffen Division (AWD) and the Rise Above Movement (R.A.M.), have recruited veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan conflict. And their military expertise is shared with white supremacists in other countries. R.A.M. members have traveled to Germany, Ukraine, and Italy to celebrate Adolf Hitler's birthday and to forge stronger organizational links with white supremacists abroad.⁶⁹ Members of AWD with military experience have trained members in their overseas chapters in weapons and military tactics. In December 2018, three members of the British neo-Nazi Sonnenkrieg Division, which is affiliated with AWD, were arrested for threatening to kill "race traitor" Prince Harry.⁷⁰ The leaders had been in direct contact with German compatriots and may have had contacts with organizations in Ukraine.

Additionally, a 2018 report issued by the Canadian Armed forces (CAF), "White Supremacy, Hate Groups, and Racism in The Canadian Armed Forces" found that sixteen members of the CAF had connections to six extremist groups since 2013, four of which were founded and are led from the United States. These groups included AWD, as well as the racist skinhead group Hammerskin Nation, the anti-Muslim Proud Boys and an antigovernment militia movement known as the Three Percenters, some of whose members participated in the 2017 Charlottesville riots.⁷¹

White supremacists from the U.S. have also traveled to Ukraine, where they received military training from the antisemitic Azov Battalion. Members of the Battalion have in the past received military training and aid from the U.S. government. Now, it seems that those actions have led to enhancing the military skills of our own white supremacists, which could lead to deadly domestic consequences for Americans.⁷²

These international connections also warrant close scrutiny by this body and by the Armed Forces.

Today, the white supremacist movement is more energized and emboldened than it has been in decades – and we are seeing increased violence in the form of hate crimes and domestic terrorism as a result both here at home and abroad. This violence is in some cases coming from active duty military and veterans, and white supremacist groups are aggressively courting active-duty troops to join their cause. We must do everything in our power to end any nexus between these extremists and military personnel. It is imperative

⁶⁹<https://thesoufancenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Report-by-The-Soufan-Center-White-Supremacy-Extremism-The-Transnational-Rise-of-The-Violent-White-Supremacist-Movement.pdf>

⁷⁰<https://thinkprogress.org/suspected-neo-nazis-arrested-in-britain-on-terror-charges-90c7e05461ba/>

⁷¹https://www.antihate.ca/tags/canadian_armed_forces

⁷²<https://www.mintpressnews.com/fbi-neo-nazi-militia-trained-by-us-military-in-ukraine-now-training-us-white-supremacists/251687/>

that we speak out strongly against white supremacy in our Armed Forces and act decisively to root out military members who hold these views.

Thank you.