



**Statement before the
House Committee on Veterans' Affairs**

***“Violent Domestic Extremist Groups and
the Recruitment of Veterans.”***

A Testimony by:

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Wednesday, October 13, 2021

Virtual

Chairman Takano, Ranking Member Bost, and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before the Committee on Veteran's Affairs on "Violent Domestic Extremist Groups and the Recruitment of Veterans." The threat from domestic terrorism in the United States is serious and continues to evolve. As this testimony highlights, objective analysis and better data are particularly important to gauge the nature of the threat and effective responses. As the data in this testimony highlights, veterans—along with active duty and reservists—have been involved in a growing percentage of domestic terrorist plots and attacks. Some veterans have also been involved in extremist activity on cyber and digital platforms. In addition, extremist networks seek to embed their members in the military and actively recruit current and retired military personnel—including veterans. Veterans have valuable skills that extremist networks want, such as small unit tactics, communications, logistics, reconnaissance, and surveillance.

The rest of this testimony is divided into four sections. The first outlines the contours of domestic terrorism and highlights the data set compiled by analysts at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). The second section focuses on trends in domestic terrorist incidents and fatalities. The third assesses historical and current patterns in terrorism regarding the military—including veterans. The fourth section highlights implications for Congress.¹

I. Terrorism

Terrorism includes the deliberate use—or threat—of violence by non-state actors to achieve political goals and create a broad psychological impact.² Violence and the threat of violence are important components of terrorism. In focusing on terrorism, the data used in this testimony does not focus on the broader categories of hate speech or hate crimes. There is some overlap between terrorism and hate crimes, since some hate crimes include the use or threat of violence. But hate crimes can also include non-violent incidents, such as graffiti and verbal abuse. Hate crimes and hate speech are obviously concerning and a threat to society, but the data concentrates on terrorism and the use—or threat—of violence to achieve political objectives.

This testimony leverages a CSIS data set, which includes 980 cases of terrorist plots and attacks in the United States between January 1, 1994, and January 31, 2021. The data set is divided into such categories as the incident date, perpetrator, location, motivation, number of individuals wounded or killed, target, weapons used, and perpetrators' current or former affiliations with law enforcement and the military—including veterans.

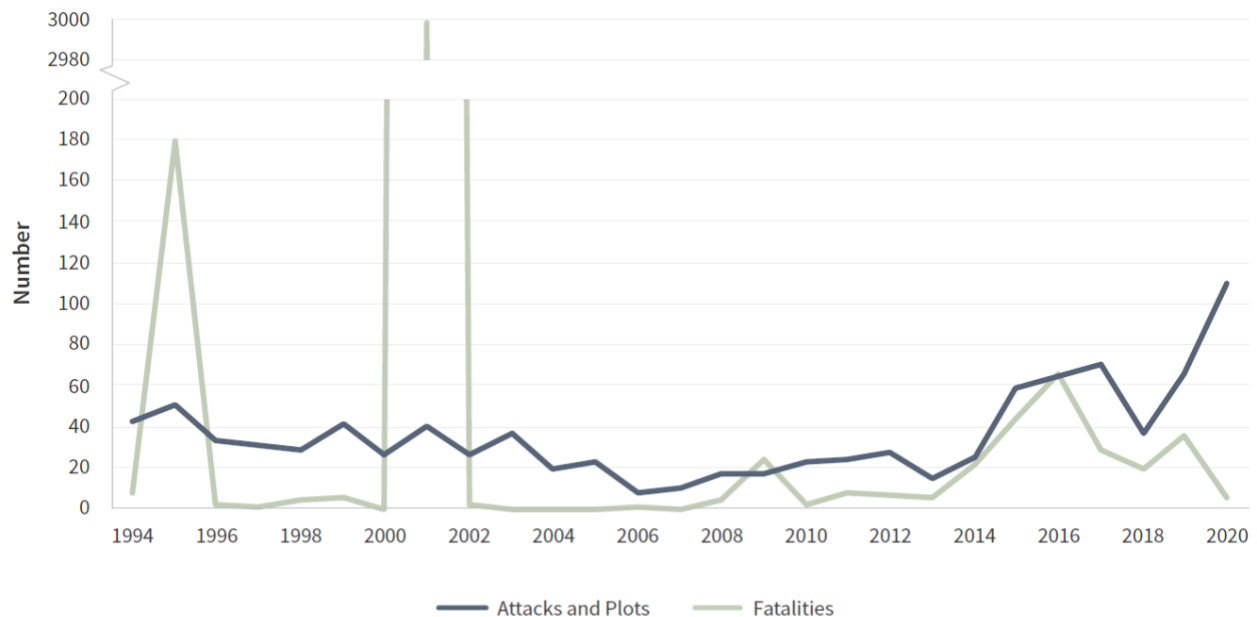
¹ This testimony draws heavily on data and analysis published in several articles, including Seth G. Jones, Catrina Doxsee, Grace Hwang, and Jared Thompson, *The Military, Police, and the Rise of Terrorism in the United States* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, April 12, 2021), <https://www.csis.org/analysis/military-police-and-rise-terrorism-united-states>; and Seth G. Jones, Catrina Doxsee, and Nicholas Harrington, *The Tactics and Targets of Domestic Terrorists* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, July 30, 2020), <https://www.csis.org/analysis/tactics-and-targets-domestic-terrorists>.

² On definitions of terrorism, see, for example, Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, 3rd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017); and Global Terrorism Database, *Codebook: Inclusion Criteria and Variables* (College Park, MD: University of Maryland, October 2019), <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/downloads/Codebook.pdf>.

II. Trends in Incidents and Fatalities

In 2020, the number of domestic terrorist attacks and plots increased to its highest level since at least 1994, though fatalities were relatively low. Across all perpetrator ideologies, there were 110 domestic terrorist attacks and plots in 2020—an increase of 45 incidents since 2019 and 40 more incidents than in 2017, the year which previously had the most terrorist attacks and plots since the beginning of the data set. The trends in the data suggest that the threat from domestic terrorism is rising.

Figure 1: Number of Domestic Terrorist Attacks and Plots and Fatalities, 1994–2020



Note: Fatality data exclude perpetrators. Data from 1995 include the Oklahoma City bombing, in which 168 victims died. Data from 2001 include the 9/11 attacks, in which 2,977 victims died. Source: Data compiled by CSIS Transnational Threats Project.

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Despite this increase in terrorist activity, however, the number of fatalities from domestic terrorist attacks was relatively low in 2020 compared to recent years. There are several possible explanations for this drop in lethality. First, there were 21 terrorist plots recorded in 2020 which were disrupted before an attack could take place. Some decrease in fatalities, then, may be attributed to the effective work of the FBI and other law enforcement agencies in preventing attacks. Second, there were no mass-casualty terrorist attacks in 2020. Third, the restraint shown in those attacks may point to perpetrators opting to send a message through fear rather than fatalities.

III. Veterans and the Military: Past and Present

This section begins with a historical overview of military personnel—including veterans—involved in terrorism. It then examines more recent data about military personnel as both perpetrators and targets of terrorism. To be clear, this analysis does not focus on the broader

question of extremism in the military, including its pervasiveness and causes. Nor does it offer a systematic analysis of why these numbers have increased, though it does offer some hypotheses.

There are important distinctions between the types of military personnel. While active-duty members serve full time in the military, reservists are only part time and cannot be charged under the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) when they are off duty. The military has even less authority to respond to veterans who become involved in extremist behavior. But if their conduct violates the UCMJ, the military may be able to respond with retroactive demotions and reduced pensions.³

Historical Trends: A small, though concerning number of military personnel have been involved in domestic extremism over the years. The Vietnam War and other political, economic, and social factors led to a consolidation and expansion of white power activists, who attempted to recruit active-duty soldiers, reservists, and veterans.⁴ In 1970 alone, the U.S. Marine Corps recorded over a thousand incidents of racial violence at installations in the United States and Vietnam, including violent altercations between black and white Marines at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina.⁵ While most of these were not acts of terrorism, they still contributed to an enabling environment for extremist acts.

In addition, several influential extremists in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s were veterans. For instance, one of the most prominent white supremacist figures was Louis Beam, who enlisted in the Army when he was 19 years old and fought in the Vietnam War.⁶ In his speeches and writings—including his influential *Essays of a Klansman*—Beam argued that activists needed to continue waging the war on U.S. territory using guerrilla warfare.⁷ Beam was not alone. Randy Duey, a member of the white supremacist group The Order, was an Air Force veteran and instructor at the survival school at Fairchild Air Force Base in Spokane, Washington.⁸ Randy Weaver—a Christian Identity adherent who held white supremacist and anti-government views, and who was involved in the 1992 Ruby Ridge standoff near Naples, Idaho—was a former U.S. Army engineer.⁹ Timothy McVeigh, who carried out the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing that killed 168 people and injured more than 680 others, enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1988 and fought in Iraq during Operation Desert Storm. There were also other veterans involved in extremism, such as William Potter Gale, Richard Butler, Bo Gritz, Frazier Glenn Miller, and Eric Rudolph.¹⁰

³ “The Threat From Within: Domestic Extremists in the United States Military,” Soufan Center, *IntelBrief*, March 10, 2021, <https://thesoufancenter.org/intelbrief-2021-march-10/>.

⁴ Kathleen Belew, *Bring the War Home: The White Power Movement and Paramilitary America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), 136–137.

⁵ Kimberley L. Phillips, *War! What Is It Good For?: Black Freedom Struggles and the U.S. Military from World War II to Iraq* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 226.

⁶ Louis Beam’s father also served as a soldier and fought in World War I. Christian G. Appy, *Working-Class War: American Combat Soldiers and the Vietnam Wars, 1945-1990* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991).

⁷ Louis R. Beam, Jr., *Essays of a Klansman* (Hayden Lake, ID: A.K.I.A. Publications, 1983).

⁸ L.J. Davis, “Ballad of an American Terrorist: A New-Nazi’s Dream of Order,” *Harper’s Magazine*, July 1986.

⁹ On Weaver’s account of Ruby Ridge, see Randy Weaver and Sara Weaver, *The Federal Siege at Ruby Ridge: In Our Own Words* (Marion, MT: Ruby Ridge, Inc., 1998).

¹⁰ See, for example, Cynthia Miller-Idriss, *Hate in the Homeland: The New Global Far Right* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2020); Barry J. Balleck, *Modern American Extremism and Domestic Terrorism: An Encyclopedia of Extremists and Extremist Groups* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2018); and Bruce Hoffman and

Among the most prominent white power books during this period was *The Turner Diaries*, a dystopian novel that drew heavily on the concept of military personnel as white power soldiers. Written by William Pierce and published under the pseudonym Andrew Macdonald, *The Turner Diaries* depicts a violent revolution in the United States which leads to the overthrow of the federal government, a nuclear war, and a race war that results in the extermination of non-whites. In a reference to the U.S. military's experience fighting communist governments and insurgent groups across the globe, the protagonist, Earl Turner, notes, "We have had the example of decades of guerrilla warfare in Africa, Asia, and Latin American to instruct us."¹¹ William Pierce and his National Alliance, a white supremacist and neo-Nazi political organization, attempted to recruit military and law enforcement personnel.¹²

According to FBI data, 37 percent of lone offender terrorists in the United States between 1972 and 2015 served in the military.¹³ But in the decade after September 11, 2001, there were relatively few attacks by active-duty, reservist, or even veterans, though extremist groups attempted to infiltrate the military.¹⁴ But the trends recently began to change.

The Military and Veterans: As Figure 2 shows, there was an increase in the percentage of domestic terrorist plots and attacks perpetrated by active-duty and reserve personnel in recent years.¹⁵ In 2020, 6.4 percent of all domestic terrorist attacks and plots (7 of 110 total) were committed by one or more active-duty or reserve members—an increase from 1.5 percent in 2019 (1 of 65 total) and none in 2018. While the attacks in 2021 account for only one month, the numbers in January 2021 showed another increase: 17.6 percent of domestic terrorism plots and attacks (3 of 17 total) were committed by active-duty or reserve personnel. Veterans consistently committed more attacks and plots than active-duty and reserve troops—including 10 percent of all domestic terrorist attacks and plots since 2015, according to CSIS data.

Jacob Ware, "The Challenges of Effective Counterterrorism Intelligence in the 2020s," Lawfare, June 21, 2020, <https://www.lawfareblog.com/challenges-effective-counterterrorism-intelligence-2020s>.

¹¹ Andrew Macdonald [William Luther Pierce], *Turner Diaries* (Washington, DC: National Alliance, 1980), 98.

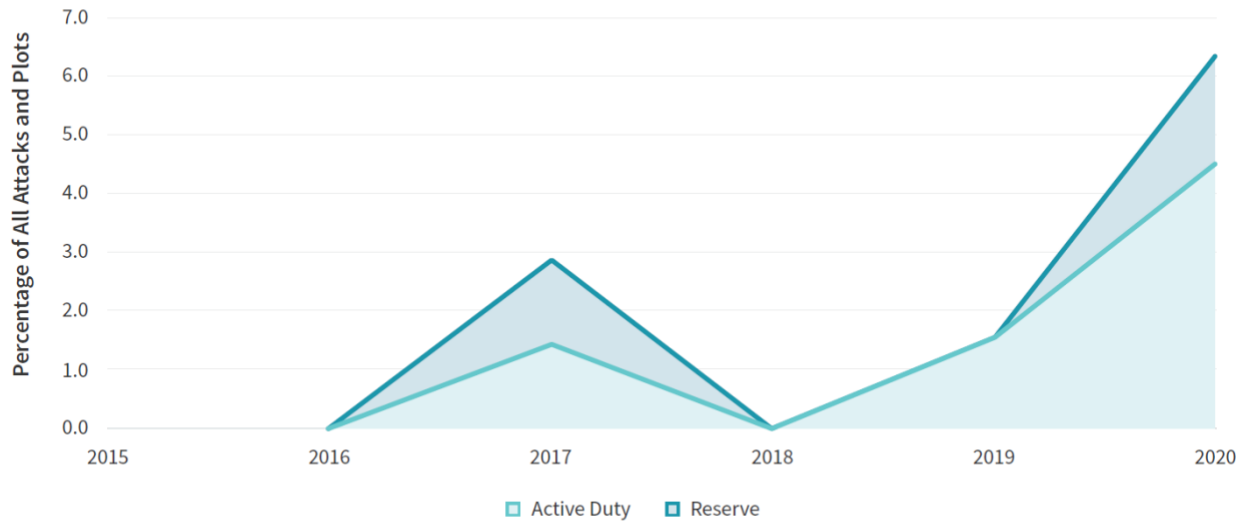
¹² Federal Bureau of Investigation, *White Supremacist Infiltration of Law Enforcement* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, October 2006), 5.

¹³ Federal Bureau of Investigation, *Lone Offender: A Study of Lone Offender Terrorism in the United States (1972-2015)* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, November 2019), 17.

¹⁴ Michael German, *Hidden In Plain Sight: Racism, White Supremacy, and Far-Right Militancy in Law Enforcement* (New York: Brennan Center for Justice, August 27, 2020).

¹⁵ In at least one case, one perpetrator (Air Force Staff Sergeant Steven Carrillo) was involved in two terrorist incidents. There were also some incidents in the CSIS data set that were perpetrated by multiple individuals who were current or active military or law enforcement personnel. For more details on the coding, please see the methodology linked at the end of this brief.

Figure 2: Percentage of Domestic Terrorist Attacks and Plots Perpetrated by Active-Duty or Reserve Service Members, 2015–2020



Source: Data compiled by CSIS Transnational Threats Project.

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On January 19, 2021, for example, the FBI and U.S. Army Counterintelligence Coordinating Authority arrested a U.S. Army soldier, Cole James Bridges, at Fort Stewart after he conspired to blow up the 9/11 Memorial in New York and attempted to provide support to the Islamic State.¹⁶ On July 25, 2020, Daniel Perry, an active-duty Army sergeant, shot and killed a protester in Austin, Texas.¹⁷ On June 10, 2020, the FBI arrested Army Private Ethan Melzer, who sent sensitive U.S. military information to the Order of the Nine Angles (O9A), an occult-based neo-Nazi and white supremacist group, in an attempt to facilitate a mass-casualty attack on Melzer's Army unit.¹⁸ On May 29, 2020, Air Force Staff Sergeant Steven Carrillo, a supporter of the Boogaloo Bois who wanted to ignite a civil war, shot and killed Pat Underwood, a protective security officer, and wounded his partner in Oakland, California. Carrillo also killed a Santa Cruz County sheriff's deputy in Ben Lomond, California with an assault rifle on June 6, 2020.¹⁹

¹⁶ "U.S. Army Soldier Arrested for Attempting to Assist ISIS to Conduct Deadly Ambush on U.S. Troops," U.S. Department of Justice, January 19, 2021, <https://www.justice.gov/usao-sdny/pr/us-army-soldier-arrested-attempting-assist-isis-conduct-deadly-ambush-us-troops>.

¹⁷ Daniel Perry's Twitter posts from the account @knivesfromtrigu, which we examined, included such comments as, "Now is the time to take up arms and protect yourselves against violence" (May 31, 2020), "Fuck that shit you shoot center of mass. 1 it is a bigger target. 2 it still drops them. 3 even if you shoot them in the leg there is a major artery that will cause the person to bleed out in just a few minutes" (June 3, 2020), and "Send them to Texas we will show them why we say don't mess with Texas" (June 19, 2020).

¹⁸ "U.S. Army Soldier Charged with Terrorism Offenses for Planning Deadly Ambush on Service Members in His Unit," U.S. Department of Justice, June 22, 2020, <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/us-army-soldier-charged-terrorism-offenses-planning-deadly-ambush-service-members-his-unit>.

¹⁹ United States of America v. Steven Carrillo, Criminal Complaint, United States District Court for the Northern District of California, May 29, 2020, <https://www.justice.gov/opa/press-release/file/1285706/download>; United States of America vs. Robert Alvin Justus, Jr., Criminal Complaint, United States District Court for the Northern

In addition, the January 6, 2021, attack at the U.S. Capitol included at least 66 veterans—along with reservists, a member of the National Guard, members of several militias and extremist organizations (such as the Sons of Liberty New Jersey, Groyper Army, Oath Keepers, Proud Boys, Boogaloo Bois, and Three Percenters), supporters of the extremist conspiracy QAnon, and other groups and networks. On January 13, the FBI arrested Jacob Fracker, a U.S. Army National Guardsman, for his involvement in the Capitol attack.²⁰ As Fracker explained in an Instagram post, “Sorry I hate freedom? Sorry I fought for it and lost friends for it? . . . I can protest for what I believe in and still support your protest for what you believe in. Just saying . . . after all, I fought for your right to do it.”²¹

Veterans have also been involved in domestic terrorist attacks and plots.²² In October 2020, the FBI arrested Adam Fox, Barry Croft, and several other accomplices in a plot to kidnap and potentially execute Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer. Members of this network, which had ties to militias in Michigan and other states, referred to Governor Whitmer as a “tyrant” and claimed that she had “uncontrolled power right now.”²³ Paul Edward Bellar, a U.S. Army veteran who had been honorably discharged roughly a year before his arrest, trained the group on the use of firearms, medical care, and other tactical skills.²⁴ In addition, Brian Lemley, a member of the white supremacist group The Base who was arrested by the FBI in 2020, had served in the U.S. Army and helped create military-style training for the organization.²⁵ Some have also engaged in extremist activity on mainstream digital platforms (such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Telegram, and Reddit), lesser-known platforms (such as Gab, Discord, Minds, and Bitchute), forums (such as Stormfront), and other online communities.

Domestic extremist groups and networks have also attempted to recruit veterans, active-duty personnel, and reservists. To be clear, this analysis is not suggesting that individuals serving in the military or who are veterans are more inclined to embrace extremism than the general population or are attracted to extremist ideologies. Nevertheless, violent far-right and far-left networks have solicited military personnel because of their skill sets. According to one estimate, veterans and

District of California, Case No. 4:20-mj-70771-MAG, May 29, 2020, <https://www.justice.gov/opa/press-release/file/1285696/download>; and “Two Defendants Charged with Murder and Aiding and Abetting in Slaying of Federal Protective Service Officer at Oakland Courthouse Building,” U.S. Department of Justice, June 16, 2020, <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/two-defendants-charged-murder-and-aiding-and-abetting-slaying-federal-protective-service>.

²⁰ “Two Off-Duty Virginia Police Officers Charged in Federal Court Following Events at the U.S. Capitol,” U.S. Department of Justice, January 13, 2021, <https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/pr/two-duty-virginia-police-officers-charged-federal-court-following-events-us-capitol>.

²¹ “Statement of Facts, Description: Complaint w/Arrest Warrant,” U.S. Department of Justice, Case 1:21-mj-00036, January 12, 2021, <https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/press-release/file/1353461/download>.

²² See, for example, Anthony McCann, *Shadowlands: Fear and Freedom at the Oregon Standoff* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2019).

²³ *United States of America v. Adam Fox, Barry Croft, Ty Garbin, Kaleb Franks, Daniel Harris, and Brandon Caserta*, Criminal Complaint, Case 1:20-mj-00416-SJB, October 6, 2020.

²⁴ Darcie Moran and Joe Guillen, “South Carolina Man Extradited in Whitmer Kidnap Plot,” *Detroit Free Press*, October 20, 2020, <https://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/2020/10/20/south-carolina-extradited-whitmer-kidnap-plot-paul-bellar/3653588001/>.

²⁵ U.S. Department of Justice, “Three Alleged Members of the Violent Extremist Group “The Base” Facing Federal Firearms and Alien-Related Charges,” January 16, 2020, <https://www.justice.gov/usao-md/pr/three-alleged-members-violent-extremist-group-base-facing-federal-firearms-and-alien>.

active-duty members of the military currently make up roughly 25 percent of active militia members.²⁶ Such organizations as the Proud Boys, Oath Keepers, and Three Percenters include active-duty personnel, reservists, veterans, and law enforcement personnel.²⁷ The Boogaloo Bois, anti-fascists, and extremists with other motivations have also included active-duty personnel, reservists, and veterans.

While this analysis does not conduct a comprehensive analysis of *why* there was a rise in the number and percentage of active-duty and reserve personnel involved in domestic terrorist attacks and plots, there are several hypotheses that should be analyzed. For example, it would be worth examining whether the deployment of soldiers to battlefields such as Iraq and Afghanistan triggered a backlash against U.S. society and the government (much like with the Vietnam War); whether military personnel have been increasingly influenced by the political polarization prevalent in the United States; or whether military personnel have been more active on the internet and social media platforms, which has contributed to radicalization. In addition, there may be other social, economic, educational, or cultural variables at play, along with the possible proliferation of charismatic individuals that have spread propaganda in the military.

Terrorist Targeting of Military: CSIS data also show that the U.S. government, military, and law enforcement were increasingly targeted by domestic terrorists. As shown in Figure 3, government, military, and police personnel and facilities were the target of 34 of 89 attacks in 2020 from perpetrators of varying ideologies, making them the most frequent targets.²⁸ Of these 34 attacks, 19 targeted the government, 15 targeted law enforcement, and 1 targeted the military.²⁹ The attacks were led by perpetrators of various ideologies, including violent far-right, violent far-left, religious, and the Boogaloo Bois—who were responsible for all attacks coded as “other” in the 2020 data. Active shooters also targeted military locations, such as bases and recruiting stations, according to FBI data.³⁰

²⁶ Jennifer Steinhauer, “Veterans Fortify the Ranks of Militias Aligned With Trump’s Views,” *New York Times*, January 20, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/11/us/politics/veterans-trump-protests-militias.html>.

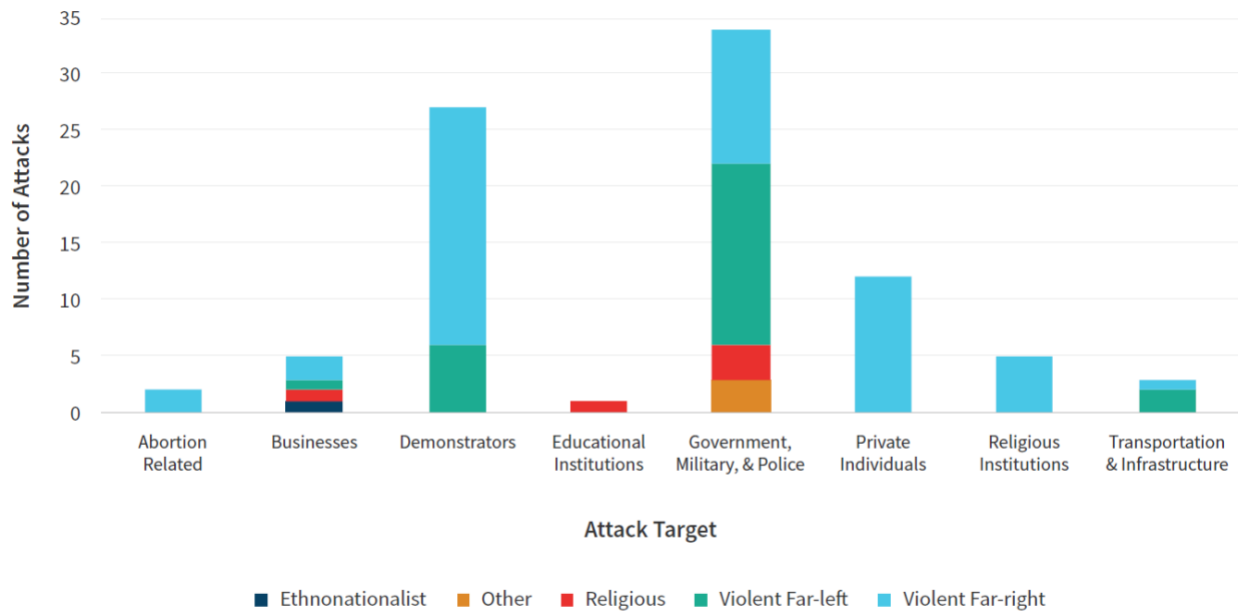
²⁷ For example, the founder and leader of the Oath Keepers, Stewart Rhodes, served in the U.S. Army and was honorably discharged following an injury from a parachute jump.

²⁸ Target data include only terrorist attacks and not foiled plots, the targets of which are not always known.

²⁹ In one case, Brian Maiorana made terrorist threats against both law enforcement and government targets. This incident is counted in both subcategories.

³⁰ Federal Bureau of Investigation, *Active Shooter Incidents in the United States in 2020* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, July 2021), <https://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/active-shooter-incidents-in-the-us-2020-070121.pdf/view>.

Figure 3: Targets of Domestic Terrorist Attacks by Perpetrator Orientation, 2020



Note: Target data exclude foiled terrorist plots, the targets of which are not always known.
 Source: Data compiled by CSIS Transnational Threats Project.

In addition, the percentage of domestic terrorist attacks against government, military, and police agencies *increased* over the past five years. In 2020, 38 percent of all domestic terrorist attacks targeted these institutions. This was the second-highest percentage since at least 1994—exceeded only in 2013, when attacks against government, military, and police targets comprised 46 percent of all attacks. The frequency of attacks against military and law enforcement targets may be due, in part, to a growing belief by extremists that security agencies are the most visible arm of what they consider to be an illegitimate and oppressive government.

Figure 4: Percentage of Domestic Terrorist Attacks Targeting Government, Military, and Police Facilities and Personnel, 1994–2020



Note: Target data exclude foiled terrorist plots, the targets of which are not always known.
Source: Data compiled by CSIS Transnational Threats Project.

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IV. Implications for Congress

With Congress's help and oversight, the U.S. military needs to better understand the scope of extremism in the military—including among veterans—through better data collection and analysis. The U.S. military has already taken concrete steps along these lines in such areas as sexual assault and suicides. However, the number of active-duty military personnel, and reservists involved in domestic terrorism is rising.³¹

In addition, extremist networks seek to embed their members in the military and actively recruit current and retired military personnel—including veterans.³² The Russian government has also recognized that these groups may be vulnerable to extremist ideologies and targeted active-duty personnel, reservists, and veterans through an aggressive campaign on cyber and digital platforms.³³ Military and law enforcement personnel have valuable skills that extremist networks

³¹ See, for example, New Jersey Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness, *Supplemental Threat Assessment 2020-2021: The Convergence of COVID-19, Nationwide Civil Unrest, and the Upcoming Presidential Election* (Trenton, NJ: State of New Jersey, New Jersey Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness, September 2020), 5, <https://www.njhomelandsecurity.gov/analysis/2020-2021-supplemental-threat-assessment>; and Texas Department of Public Safety, *Texas Domestic Terrorism Threat Assessment* (Austin, TX: January 2020), 4, 38, https://www.dps.texas.gov/director_staff/media_and_communications/2020/txTerrorThreatAssessment.pdf.

³² Hoffman and Ware, "The Challenges of Effective Counterterrorism Intelligence in the 2020s."

³³ Suzanne Spaulding and Devi Nair, *Why the Kremlin Targets Veterans* (Washington, DC: CSIS, November 8, 2019), <https://www.csis.org/analysis/why-kremlin-targets-veterans>; and Kristofer Goldsmith, *An Investigation Into Foreign Entities Who Are Targeting Servicemembers and Veterans Online* (Silver Spring, MD: Vietnam Veterans of America, September 17, 2019), <https://vva.org/trollreport/>.

want and may also have access to weapons and explosives. In January 2021, for example, several pounds of C-4 explosives went missing from a Marine Corps base in Twentynine Palms, California.³⁴

Any effort to disrupt extremism in the military—including veterans—must address all stages of service. In vetting new recruits and renewing existing security clearances, for example, revisions to the SF-86 process should help identify individuals associated with extremist networks. At least one reservist who participated in the January 6 Capitol attack held a security clearance and was well known among his colleagues for harboring extremist views.³⁵ An FBI database of lone offender terrorism in the United States indicated that 10 percent of offenders between 1972 and 2015 took steps to join the military, but were either disqualified during the application process or dropped out after realizing they might not meet the qualifications.³⁶ Deterrence is critical. The DoD should publicly announce any changes to its vetting processes to deter those with extremist views from even attempting to join the military.

There should also be a focus on soon-to-be veterans who are exiting the military, who are at an increased risk of recruitment.³⁷ A data-driven understanding of the nature of extremist behavior among military personnel could help inform and prioritize these efforts. For example, CSIS data found that while there was an increase in active-duty and reserve personnel involvement in terrorist attacks and plots, the majority of perpetrators affiliated with the military in recent years were veterans. Though the military does not have as much influence over the behavior of veterans once they separate from the military, the DoD could pull service records for all military-affiliated perpetrators and gather information to better understand the causes. Such patterns could inform efforts to disrupt radicalization pathways before individuals leave the military. Congressionally-directed or agency-initiated efforts by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) could also help identify and counter extremist activity among veterans, and data-sharing agreements between the DoD and VA could strengthen deradicalization efforts.

Concerns about extremism in the military and law enforcement are not confined to the United States.³⁸ Germany has faced significant problems, from which the United States may be able to draw some lessons. In November 2020, a German government investigation identified 26 soldiers and 9 police officers who organized and participated in online chat groups that shared far-right, anti-Semitic, and neo-Nazi content.³⁹ The investigations came on the heels of an October 2020 report by the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (Bundesamt für

³⁴ Philip Athey, "Several Pounds of C-4 Explosives Allegedly Missing from California Marine Base," *Marine Corps Times*, February 4, 2021, <https://www.marinecorpstimes.com/news/your-marine-corps/2021/02/04/several-pounds-of-c-4-explosives-are-missing-from-california-marine-base/>.

³⁵ United States of America v. Timothy Louis Hale-Cousanelli, Motion for Emergency Stay and Appeal of Release, United States District Court for the District of Columbia, Case No. 21-cr-37 (TNM), March 12, 2021.

³⁶ Federal Bureau of Investigation, *Lone Offender*, 18.

³⁷ See, for example, Pete Simi, Bryan F. Bubolz, and Ann Hardman, "Military Experience, Identity Discrepancies, and Far Right Terrorism: An Exploratory Analysis," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 36 (July 2013): 654–671.

³⁸ See, for example, Daniel Koehler, *A Threat From Within? Exploring the Link Between the Extreme Right and the Military* (The Hague: International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, September 2019).

³⁹ "Germany Investigates Soldiers Over Anti-Semitic, Far-Right Group Chat," *Deutsche Welle*, November 27, 2020, <https://www.dw.com/en/germany-investigates-soldiers-over-anti-semitic-far-right-group-chat/a-55755101>; and "Germany: 9 Police Officers Probed Over Far-Right Chat Groups," *Deutsche Welle*, November 24, 2020, <https://www.dw.com/en/germany-9-police-officers-probed-over-far-right-chat-groups/a-55708146>.

Verfassungsschutz, or BfV), which documented more than 1,400 cases of far-right extremism in the police and intelligence services over the previous four years.⁴⁰ In 2020, Germany's Defense Ministry identified 20 far-right extremists within a company of the country's elite special forces, the Kommando Spezialkräfte. The German military disbanded the 2nd Company, though 48,000 rounds of ammunition and more than 135 pounds of explosives went missing from the unit's stockpiles.⁴¹ More broadly, the European police agency Europol warned in a confidential report that extremist groups in Europe attempted to bolster their "combat skills" by recruiting military and police members.⁴²

Of broader concern, the U.S. government needs to more systematically and routinely release data on terrorist attacks and plots, including on the characteristics of perpetrators like veterans. However, if a centralized data collection effort were established, data analysis could offer an objective mechanism for apportioning counterterrorism resources and efforts relative to actual threats.

Terrorism, like crime, will not end. But better data collection and analysis—along with effective countermeasures—can significantly reduce the threat from domestic extremists.

⁴⁰ Kate Connolly, "Hundreds of Right-Wing Extremist Incidents by Germany Security Services Revealed," *Guardian*, October 6, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/oct/06/report-reveals-hundreds-of-rightwing-extremist-incidents-by-german-security-services>.

⁴¹ Nina Werkhäuser, "German Elite Military Force Fights Far-Right Extremism In Its Ranks," *Deutsche Welle*, November 3, 2020, <https://www.dw.com/en/german-armed-forces-bundeswehr-elite-unit/a-55485194>; and Cynthia Miller-Idriss, "When the Far Right Penetrates Law Enforcement: America Can Learn from Germany," *Foreign Affairs*, December 15, 2020, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2020-12-15/when-far-right-penetrates-law-enforcement>.

⁴² Darko Janjevic, "Europe's Right-Wing Extremists Try Recruiting from Police, Army," *Deutsche Welle*, September 24, 2019, <https://www.dw.com/en/europes-right-wing-extremists-try-recruiting-from-police-army/a-50557142>.