



# Domestic Terrorism: A Brief Guide to Groups

Malcom Lewis  
CEO Foxhole Consulting  
May 2023

# Table of Contents

Introduction .....	2
Nothing New .....	3
Terrorist Group Descriptions .....	5
Domestic Terrorist Financing .....	8
Recommendations .....	10

# Introduction

According to U.S. law, domestic terrorism is generally defined as involving criminal acts dangerous to human life occurring in the U.S. that appear intended to coerce a civilian population or influence or affect the conduct of government.<sup>1</sup>

America is facing a dramatic rise in domestic terrorism. Many recent attacks are linked to anti-government militia groups and other extremist organizations, including the assault on the Capitol Building on January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2021. The Oath Keepers and the Proud Boys –groups that declare themselves defenders of the Constitution – were just convicted of seditious conspiracy for their role in 1/6.

Not all domestic terrorist groups are large and well organized but their presence online validates and even encourages “lone wolf” actors. Motivated by racism, antisemitism, and misogyny, the goal of these shooters is to simply kill as many people as possible. A single shooter killed 26 at the Southern Springs Church in rural Texas. At the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, PA., the shooter killed 11 and wounded 6 more. In Buffalo, New York, a shooter targeted a “Black supermarket”, killing 10 and injuring 3 more.



**“Hate speech is an alarm bell - the louder it rings, the greater the threat of genocide. It precedes and promotes violence.”**

ANTÓNIO GUTERRES, United Nations Secretary-General, 2023<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> According to the Government Accountability Office

<sup>2</sup> United Nations | Hate Speech

## Nothing New

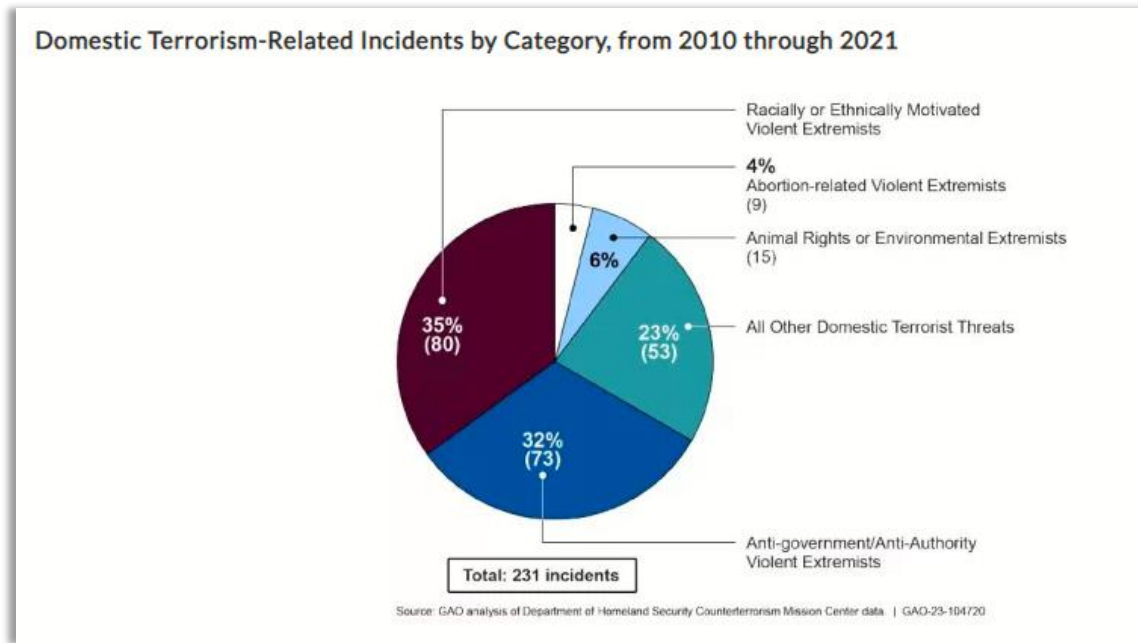


*Memorial at the site of the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City*

There is nothing new about domestic terrorism in America, In 1995, Timothy McVeigh blew up the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, killing 168 people including 19 children in the daycare facility. In 2016, an extremist murderer shot and killed five police officers in Dallas. What was likely the “first lone” wolf mass shooting happened in 1966 at the University of Texas. A former marine barricaded himself in the campus bell tower and fired randomly into the crowd, killing 15 people and wounding 31 others.

There is an increasing number of extremist individuals or small groups that have bonded online. While the impact of their incidents is less explosive –the random shootings at utility substations for example – they are still an indicator of what’s simmering beneath the surface.

The relationship between the growing number of hate groups and incidents of domestic terrorism is alarming law enforcement at all levels.



There are several impediments for law enforcement when it comes to charging extremists. There are no established standards for identifying a “domestic terrorist.” Civil liberties protect Americans' right to join any organization they want, including anti-authority, anti-government groups, or the Klu Klux Klan. So many indicators that seem obvious on the surface will not stand up in court – tattoos of Nazi symbols, racist/antisemitic/homophobic social media posts, and participation in protests.

It will shock most Americans to discover that there is no law specifying domestic terrorism as a crime. Most acts pursued by domestic terrorists are crimes- acts of violence and hate crimes as per (28 U.S.C. § 534) Though the perpetrators may be referred to as domestic terrorists, as of 2023, they cannot be charged with it.

# Terrorist Group Descriptions

There are many domestic terrorist groups operating in the U.S. today. Though they share some common traits, there are differences in their goals and organizational structures.

## ARMED MILITIA GROUPS

The anti-government – sometimes called patriot - groups started forming after botched FBI incidents at Ruby Ridge and Waco. These groups are typically well organized with chapters around the country. They feel strongly about the 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment and their purpose is readiness to take down a tyrannical American government. The national militias are:

- Free Percenter
- Oath Keepers
- Proud Boys
- Redneck Revolt

States that have militias include Michigan, Missouri, Idaho, New York, Montana, Pennsylvania, and Texas. All the groups play war games and train for covert operations. Despite their readiness, the capacity of the government to defend itself is far beyond their reach.

*“All 50 states prohibit private, unauthorized militias and military units from engaging in activities reserved for the state militia, including law enforcement activities. The Supreme Court decided in 1886—and repeated in 2008—that the Second Amendment “does not prevent the prohibition of private paramilitary organizations.”<sup>3</sup>*

---

<sup>3</sup> Georgetown Law Institute for Constitutional Advocacy and Protection

## WHITE NATIONALISM

These groups believe in their own superiority based on their race. Typically, they lean into the idea that the U.S. is a “Christian” nation and p that violence is needed to defend the will of God. One example is the murders of doctors and the bombing of abortion clinics. Racism, antisemitism, and homophobia are the primary driver for many of the groups. They are less structured and more secretive than some other groups, The list includes:

- Army of God
- Aryan Nation
- Jewish Defense League
- Atomwaffen Division

All of these groups justify their hatred of others with their faith. Sadly, they are responsible for some mass shootings, bombings, and other violent incidents.

## EXTREMIST MOVEMENTS

There are radical groups that have no actual leader or organizational structure. They bond and plan on social media. Most of them are not particularly well known. Some are anti-government, rebelling against taxation, and lean libertarian. Most operate as individuals, less as physical groups.

The list includes:

- **Sovereign Citizens:** Sovereign citizens believe that even though they physically reside in this country, they are separate or “sovereign” from the United States. They are anarchists who do not recognize the role of law enforcement officers and don’t have to abide by the laws of the nation. They believe they are exempt from taxes They interpret common law to justify their unique interpretation of taxes and the

justice system. They are considered a terrorist group because of attempts to get back at the government for their perceived oppression

- **Antifa:** Antifa stands for Antifascists. There is no organization but Antifa groups, masked and dressed in black, show up to disrupt far-right events. They tend to be antisemitic and believe the police are aligned with right-wing militias. Antifa members tend to swarm and attack nationalist groups and any law enforcement that gets in their way. They are considered a terrorist group because of violence against people and property.
- **Phineas Priesthood:** The priesthood opposes taxation, interracial sex, homosexuality, and abortion. The only requirement to join is to share these beliefs and be willing to act on them. The terrorism label comes from their plans to blow up FBI buildings, rob banks and bomb abortion clinics.

Sovereign Citizens is a financial scheme and tax protesting terrorist group while the Phineas Priesthood are White Christian Nationalists. Both are extremist groups with ideologies that encourage them to commit violence. Antifa started in Germany but rose to prominence in America in 2020. Antifa has no central leadership or organizational structure. Individual Antifa groups exist but they are unrelated to each other and act independently.

All three groups operate across the entire U.S. The Sovereign Citizens are anarchists, trying to sabotage the government by denying its authority. the group believes in the supremacy of the county sheriff, as having authority over all federal agents, elected officials, and even law enforcement officers. The Phineas Priesthood and Antifa are both extremist groups that propagate violence to further their ends.



## Domestic Terrorist Financing

Once again technology has supported the financing of extremist agendas. Fundraising platforms, electronic fund transfers, and cryptocurrency make raising money easier for terrorist groups. For example, the Proud Boys used the Christian crowdfunding site GiveSendGo to create 11 campaigns that raised over \$375,000. Another “defense fund” for leader Enrique Tarrio raised \$113,000 on the same site.<sup>4</sup> Not only were the campaigns successful, but the money was raised and transferred quickly. Organized militias are widely supported by far-right advocates of smaller government and a hardline stance on the sanctity of the Second Amendment.

The groups also collect membership dues, conduct events where they charge admission, and sell merchandise on the side. Though those can add up, the radical right needs more to survive and grow its base.

---

<sup>4</sup> The Guardian | Proud Boys and other far-right groups raise millions via Christian funding site

## CRYPTOCURRENCY



Cryptocurrency creates another opportunity to move money with some anonymity. Bitcoin and other crypto platforms are built on decentralized blockchain technology. Blockchain removes traditional banking as a middleman for currency exchanges. The encryption protocols hide the identities of the two parties from everyone but each other.

Many identified extremist groups have been pushed off traditional payment platforms, like PayPal. Many can no longer maintain bank accounts. So, cryptocurrency is a logical choice. Richard Spencer, an American white supremacist, called “Bitcoin the currency of the alt-right.”<sup>5</sup> A data sample of 12 far-right groups that publicly called for Bitcoin donations took in 213 Bitcoin, worth more than \$9 million at today’s value, between January 2017 and April 2021.

---

<sup>5</sup> Frontline | White Dissidents Raise Millions in Crypto Currency

The embrace of the white nationalists is based on conspiracies that claim the Jews control the global financial system. Antisemitic groups and white nationalists were convinced their money could be confiscated because of their political beliefs. They saw cryptocurrency platforms as a way to protect their money.

That in itself is interesting, given the volatility of the crypto marketplace. In 2022, Bitcoin lost 63% of its value, Ethereum lost 67% and Dogecoin was down 55%.<sup>6</sup> There have been numerous scams and money laundering investigations including the criminal charging of FTX. Though the crypto market went through a serious downturn in 2022, transactions by U.S-sanctioned groups rose by 1000% dramatically, making up 44% of illicit activity.<sup>7</sup>

## Recommendations

1. Congress must create the necessary laws for domestic terrorism to be a crime on its own.
2. State and local law enforcement need standards that identify domestic terrorist groups and their members. The Department of Homeland Security is the logical national owner of that task. Though some states may prefer to set their own standards, the country will not be served by a patchwork approach. We'd suggest a working group with law enforcement representatives, security professionals, and facilitators to create and present a working model.
3. Government agencies are slowly getting more focused on crypto financing by domestic terrorist groups. But the management of the response touches at least 10 separate government departments and that is just at the top level. For the U.S. to become effective in stopping and charging domestic terrorists a streamlined response is needed. The bureaucracy of the current structure is not agile enough to respond to a virtual financing system. We need

---

<sup>6</sup> CBC | Bitcoin lost 63% of its value in 2022

<sup>7</sup> Reuters | Crypto Crime Hits Record 22B in 2022

a single owner of the issue with the technical expertise to define, defend, and de-platform terrorist groups.

4. There needs to be sufficient federal funding for state, county, and municipal governments to plan and prepare for incidents of domestic terrorism. These should include but not be limited to physical security assessments of critical infrastructure, manageable solutions to protect hospitals, schools, and event venues