

# U.S. Domestic Terrorism

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**Domestic Violent Extremists:** Individuals operating/based primarily in the U.S. or its territories without direction or inspiration from a foreign terrorist group or foreign power who see to further political/social goals (wholly or in part) through unlawful acts of force or violence **dangerous to human life**



### Typical Actions Associated with Domestic Terrorism:

- Bombings & the use of Weapons of Mass Destruction
- Assassinations/Target Killings
- Shooting Sprees
- Arsons/Fire-Bombing
- Kidnappings/Hostage Situations

Type of violence carried out depends on the type of extremism and the individual carrying out the attack → usually target government/military/police

# Key Definitions

**\*Homegrown Violent Extremists**  
(further objectives of a foreign terrorist group , but act independently of the organization)

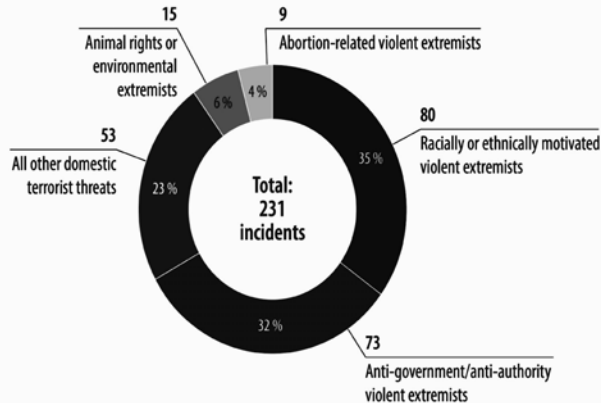
**\*Terrorism ≠ Hate Crimes (violence)**



# Types of Extremism



Figure 1 – Proportion of domestic terrorism incidents by threat group (2010–2021)



Data source: [Government Accountability Office \(GAO\)](#), February 2023.

## Classifications

1. Racial/Ethnic
2. Anti-Government/Anti-Authority
  - a. Militia
  - b. Anarchist
3. Animal-Rights/Environmental
4. Abortion Related
5. “All Other”
  - a. Salad bar/composite

## Militia Violent Extremism

- \*Paramilitary (hierarchy)
- \*Mostly Local & Decentralized
- \*Violence to Oppose Tyranny (changing)
- \*Obsessions with: FTKs, guns, uniforms, 2nd Amendment

# TIMELINE: MAJOR INCIDENTS

1963



16th Street  
Baptist  
Church  
Bombed

1968



MLK  
Assassinated

1992



Ruby Ridge  
Standoff

1993



Waco Siege

1995



Oklahoma  
City  
Bombing

2015



Charleston  
AME Church  
Shooting

2017



Charlottesville

# Focusing Event: January 6th, 2021

**Key Groups Involved** : Proud Boys, Oath Keepers, Three Percenters (NOTE: most individuals had not affiliation with a group, but are easy recruitment targets)

**Social Context** : polarization, conspiracy in the mainstream, trust of online sources and imageboard/gaming platforms, TRUMP



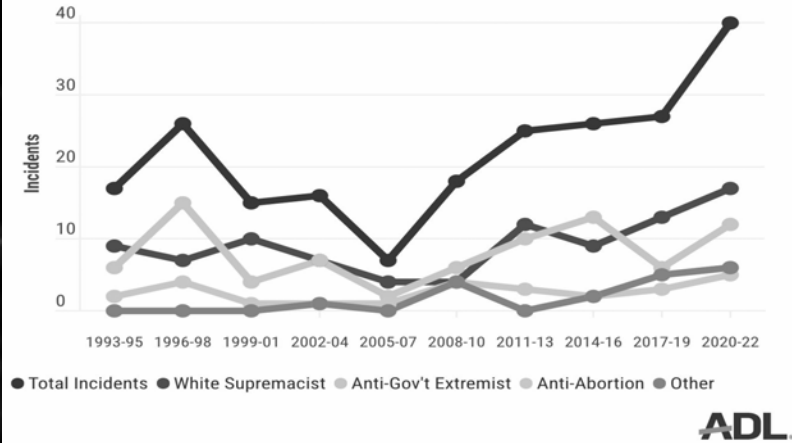
## Implications

- 2021: terrorist attacks in 18 states & D.C.
  - Highest concentration of events in Portland, Oregon (18)
  - Followed by NYC (7)
- Reveals trend of decentralization & salad bar thinking
- Contributes to the rise of attacks occurring in demonstrations
  - 2019: 2%
  - 2020: 47%
  - 2021: 53%
- Over 800 domestic terror subjects arrested om FY2021



# General DVE Trends

## Right-Wing Domestic Terrorist Incidents in the United States, 1993-2022



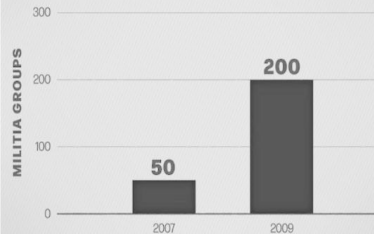
### RISE IN MILITIA GROUPS

SOURCE: SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER



### RISE IN MILITIA GROUPS

SOURCE: ANTI-DEFAMATION LEAGUE



## Militia Specific

- Early 2000s: significant decline in militia membership
- 2008: surge of militia groups
  - Obama election
  - Recession
  - Mortgage crisis
  - Rise of social media
- 2010-2015: slowing of militia activity and popularity
- 2016: spike in militia activity and membership (Trump Election)
  - Rose 65% in 2017
  - Militias begin to trust some authority
    - Police (BLM)
    - Border Security
    - "Law and Order"
  - Begin to earn credibility
- 2021 & 2022: highest rates of DVE incidents



# Federal Laws & Regulations

## Title 18 U.S. Code

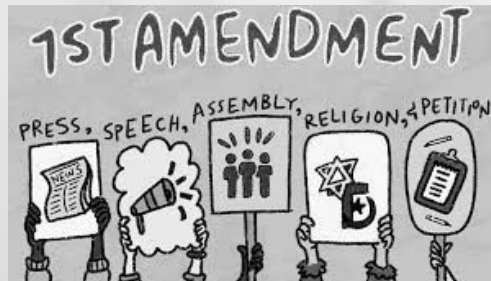
### Domestic Terrorism:

- Acts dangerous to human life (that violate law)
- Acts intended to: intimidate/coerce civilian population and sway government policy, or affect government through destruction, assassination, or kidnapping

NOT CRIMINAL

## 1st Amendment

- Freedom of speech protected (to the extent that no one is injured or harmed)



## 4th Amendment

- Investigations into domestic terrorism require warrants (probable cause & unreasonable search and seizure)
- Does not have to be followed in international cases of terrorism

## After January 6th, 2021

- Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act of 2022
- National Defense Authorization Act

Still dealing with the “security dilemma”

\*Domestic extremist groups cannot be labeled as terrorists



## National Strategy for Countering Domestic Terrorism

- Understanding/sharing domestic terrorism-related information
- Prevention (recruitment and violence)
- Disrupt and deter activities
- Confront long-term consequences (gun violence/racism)
- Enhance measures in DOJ, DHS, and DOD to deal with emerging threats

# Current Policy

## Actors Involved

- |            |                                      |
|------------|--------------------------------------|
| • FBI      | • Social Media                       |
| • Police   | • Conspiracy theorists               |
| • DHS      | • Groups like Antifa & Boogaloo Bois |
| • GOA      |                                      |
| • Citizens |                                      |
| • DOJ      |                                      |



# Sustainability

## Environment

Environmental domestic extremists are individuals who promote their ideas about the environment by attacking people, groups, businesses, and institutions who are a threat to their beliefs.

## Economic

Expensive: \$101.2 million FY22 (not mentioned specifically in FY24 Budget) to implement programs, and pay for damages

## Equity

Security Grant Programs to help non-profits protect their members, and to invest in research to help affect communities. However, racial/ethnic extremism is still highly prevalent.



# Policy Options

1. **Transparency of Data**
  - a. *Social*: concerns over privacy
  - b. *Political*: Easier option (not actually solving issue)
  - c. *Economic*: Costs a lot but creates jobs
2. **Prevention at state, local, and tribal enforcement agency levels (trainings and Nonprofit Security Grant Program)**
  - a. *Social*: already distrust in community
  - b. *Political*: too much polarization
  - c. *Economic*: costs a lot
3. **Social media management**
  - a. *Social*: habit that many won't give up
  - b. *Political*: feasible (Tik Tok)
  - c. *Economic*: people may lose jobs



## Nonprofit Security Grant Program

Grant Programs Directorate

Federal Emergency Management Agency



# FEMA

