



RESEARCH NOTE

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Summary of Active Violent Domestic Extremist Groups

Flashpoint

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CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Background	1
White Supremacy Ideology	3
Ideologies and Groups Included in this Research Note	3
Methods	3
Results	4
National Socialist Movement	4
Atomwaffen Division / National Socialist Order	6
Proud Boys	9
Boogaloo Movement	12
Unaffiliated White Supremacists	16
References	20

INTRODUCTION

This research note provides an overview of one of the most virulent and long-standing violent domestic extremist ideologies—white supremacy. White supremacist ideologies have a long history in the United States. These ideologies have endured, in part, because of their ability to evolve and adapt to the political and social issues of the day.

BACKGROUND

The terms “domestic terrorism” and “domestic extremism” are often used interchangeably but they are distinct terms. The Federal Government has an official definition for domestic terrorism that derives from criminal statute (Title 18 U.S.C. 2331(5)) but does not have an agreed-upon definition of domestic extremism. For the purposes of this research note, domestic terrorism refers to criminal

acts, and domestic extremism is defined as: “advocate racial, gender, or ethnic hatred or intolerance; advocate, create, or engage in illegal discrimination based on race, color, sex, religion, or national origin; advocate the use of or use force or violence or unlawful means to deprive individuals of their rights under the United States Constitution or the laws of the United States or any State; or advocate or seek to overthrow the Government of the United States” (Department of Defense Instruction [DoDI] 1325.06; Army Regulation [AR] 600-20, Air Force Instruction [AFI] 51-903, Marine Corps Recruiting Command Order [MCRO] 1100).

In terrorism cases inside the United States, violent acts have been inspired by extremist ideologies. These include (a) extreme political ideology (left-wing, right-wing), (b) extreme views of the role of the Federal Government (anarchists, antigovernment groups, militias), (c) extreme special interest ideology (abortion/anti-abortion, animal rights, environmental concerns, (d) anti-nuclear energy/weapons, anti-financial system), (e) extreme religious ideology (jihadi-inspired, cultic groups), and (f) ideologies based on racial/ethnic purity and superiority (white supremacists, black separatists).

Despite violent acts within the US by groups espousing extremist ideologies, the U.S. Department of Justice and the Federal Bureau of Investigation have refrained from classifying any specific U.S.-based group as terrorist (Department of State [DOS], 2012). Instead, they have delineated domestic terrorist threats—potential sources of criminal activity—to avoid problems with group-bound designations while still identifying possible sources of violence. The Department of Justice has identified domestic terrorism threats by animal rights extremists, eco-terrorists, anarchists, antigovernment extremists such as “sovereign citizens” and unauthorized militias (Militia Violent Extremists), black separatists, white supremacists, and abortion extremists (Bjelopera, 2013; 2017). Within the United States, these cases are sometimes tried as hate crimes or are prosecuted using laws other than the domestic terrorism statute.¹

Individuals adhering to these ideologies may engage in violent criminal acts as well as speech protected by the First Amendment. Extremist leaders are well acquainted with the line between protected speech and nonprotected speech. This is evident in how they engage audiences via social media platforms and other forms of publication to promote their agenda. Much extremist speech walks right up to the line of promoting violence without qualifying as a chargeable offense. For instance, extremist content may be just ambiguous enough, couched as a joke, or presented as a parody to disguise the true intent of the content. Extremist content can be hyperbolic—so extreme that it seems laughable—which is the intended effect.² Other extremist content adopts mainstream political terminology to seem legitimate and gain acceptance by larger segments of the public.

¹ Domestic terrorism statutes are infrequently used for many reasons, including the relative ease of prosecution under other criminal statutes such as conspiracy or illegal possession of dangerous materials.

² One infamous example is the Daily Stormer, a popular Neo-Nazi website. The website included a style guide for contributors that explicitly encouraged writing that would expose readers to extreme and violent ideas without the reader knowing the true intent of the author. From the guide: “The unindoctrinated should not be able to tell if we are joking or not... This is obviously a ploy and I actually do want to gas kikes... whenever someone does something violent, it should be made light of. ... dehumanize the enemy, to the point where people are ready to laugh at their deaths.” (Marantz, 2018)

WHITE SUPREMACY IDEOLOGY

Beyond the general trends outlined above, the threats posed by domestic groups espousing extremist ideologies, and the cells and lone wolf violent actors they inspire, represent a significant concern to DoD (Winter, 2014). We focus this note on a type of racial/ethnic superiority extremist group that embraces an extreme ideology best characterized as “white supremacy” or the belief that Caucasian people of western European descent are superior to people of all other racial backgrounds because this ideology “will remain the most persistent and lethal threat in the Homeland (DHS, 2020).” Furthermore, this research note focuses on these groups because of their recent rise in global recruitment efforts and, closer to home, their commitment to the overthrow of the U.S. Government (DOS, 2019).

Targets of their violence and propaganda range from members of other races, ethnicities, or religious groups associated with particular races or ethnicities to the Federal Government, military, and law enforcement. Although many of these types of groups exist, they share a common goal of racial and ethnic purity through separation, expulsion, or elimination of other racial and ethnic groups. Typically, the more extreme of these groups accuse the U.S. Government of forcing race mixing on the Nation with the goal of destroying the way of life and purity of white people as a whole.

IDEOLOGIES AND GROUPS INCLUDED IN THIS RESEARCH NOTE

In this research note, we summarize data collected on some of the most active and violent groups adhering to or incorporating different elements of white supremacist ideology. We selected these groups because of their activity level within the white supremacy movement, known military ties, capability to engage in nationwide propaganda and recruitment efforts, violent activity, and influence on social media platforms. We detail the following:

- National Socialist Movement (NSM),
- Atomwaffen Division (AWD)/National Socialist Order (NSO),
- Proud Boys,
- Boogaloo movement, and
- Unaffiliated white supremacists.

METHODS

We used a combination of open source research and primary and secondary sources to compile the information provided here. The latter is a collection of data from databases maintained by Flashpoint Inc., which includes both text and media from social media and communication platforms on which white supremacists and other threat actors engage such as Telegram, Discord, and online forums. We also relied on investigative journalism and research organizations (e.g., Bellingcat, ProPublica, and Unicorn Riot) to provide publicly available copies of white supremacist groups’ leaked communications and to reveal and confirm the identity of active and former military personnel who are members of white supremacist groups. The information compiled in the FlashPoint database also helped provide insight into the daily communication of white supremacists and far-right extremists.

RESULTS

In this section, we provide details on each selected group's history and origins, goals, ideology, symbology/iconography, size, geographic spread, demographics, connections with other organizations, past and current activities, and venues used for communication (e.g., social media platforms). The landscape of extremist activity shifts constantly, as groups form and reform according to the social and political landscape and as a result of efforts by law enforcement to disrupt their operations. Any list of groups needs to come with the caveat that membership is fluid, hard to establish, and ultimately not a prerequisite to supporting extremist ideologies.

National Socialist Movement

Short History and Origins

NSM is a longstanding neo-Nazi organization headquartered in Detroit, MI. The group is explicit in its adherence to Nazism and openly embraces and celebrates Adolf Hitler. NSM began as the Nationalist Socialist American Workers Freedom Movement in 1974. It draws its roots from George Lincoln Rockwell's American Nazi Party, which splintered into numerous factions following Rockwell's murder in 1967 (ADL, 2020d). In 1994, Jeff Schoep assumed leadership and renamed the group NSM. NSM also has, or had, a Women's Division and a Skinhead Division—which appear to be nonmember financial supporters—and a Viking Youth Corps that recruits children between the ages of 14 and 17 and trains them in military skills (TRAC, 2021). Until April 2007, the group conducted its rallies dressed in traditional neo-Nazi brown-shirt uniforms before voting to adopt a more militant-looking black "battle dress uniform." In January 2019, Schoep stepped down from his leadership role and, following issues over the legal transfer of the group, long-time NSM member Burt Colucci claimed leadership of the group.

Goals

NSM's goals are to advance the white race and create an all-white ethnostate.³ The group has a "25 Point Plan" featured on its website, outlining the movement's ideologies and future goals. The NSM's guiding principle is the 14 words: "We must secure the existence of our people and a future for White children." (ADL, 2020e)

Below are key parts of the 25 Point Plan highlighting the movement's white nationalist/supremacist, anti-immigration, and anti-Semitic stance:

- "The National Socialist Movement shall work to secure freedom for the White population of North America."
- "Immigration into the White Homeland shall be limited to members of the White European Race, which is defined as White Caucasians who are the descendants of indigenous Europeans."
- "This process of nationalization will remove the Jewish, internationalist, and capitalist stranglehold on information and resources and put these to work for the benefit of the nation and people, not international stockholders or Jewish oligarchs."

³ An ethnostate is a proposed state that is ruled by a specific ethnic group. In this case, a white ethnostate would be a state exclusively for white people and would exclude nonwhites.

Ideology, Symbolology, and Iconography

NSM has changed its logo several times in an attempt to rebrand and soften its image to attract more recruits. The group’s logo is a shield divided into four sections. The top and bottom sections depict parts of the American flag. The sections to the left and right are black and red, which are colors from the Nazi flag.

Between 2003 and 2016, the NSM logo featured the swastika symbol in the center. Between 2016 and 2019, the group removed the swastika and replaced it twice before reverting to the original logo. During this time, the NSM first replaced the swastika with the Othala rune—a popular Nordic symbol that white supremacists and white nationalists use. In late 2018, the group replaced the Othala rune with a wheel surrounding a red fasces—a symbol Benito Mussolini popularized that came to represent fascism (ADL, 2020c).

NSM members have also been seen with Schutzstaffel (SS) bolts on their uniforms or as tattoos, which is a common symbol among other white supremacists and neo-Nazis. Figure 1 shows NSM’s current imagery and icons.



Figure 1 NSM Logos & Flags

Estimated Size

NSM is recognized as the largest neo-Nazi organization in the U.S., owing to what the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) has labeled an “open-arms recruiting policy” and its demonstrated ability to recruit young members. Its recruitment policy allows members of other white supremacist groups to participate in NSM activities without full membership. The NSM reportedly has 30 to 40 core members with an estimated full membership of a few hundred. In recent years, the group has struggled to maintain membership owing to the rise of alt-right groups that appeal to younger recruits. Additionally, Schoep’s decision to step down from his leadership position, and his alleged transfer of the group’s ownership to a preacher has impacted the group overall.

Geographic Spread, Demographics

NSM claims that it has units in all 50 States. In addition, the group operates chapters in Great Britain, Italy, Estonia, Sweden, South Africa, and New Zealand.

Connections with Other Organizations

The NSM leads The Nationalist Front, an alliance of various white supremacist groups, including Patriot Front, Traditionalist Worker Party, and various KKK and Knights of the KKK groups. In May 2017, Schoep participated in an East Coast Knights of KKK-sponsored cross burning in Pennsylvania.

The group also participates in rallies alongside other neo-Nazi and white supremacist groups, including Aryan Nations, Loyal White Knights, Aryan Strikeforce, SS Action Group, Texas Rebel Knights, Nationalist Party, and Art Jones, an Illinois congressional candidate.

Past and Current Activities

NSM distributes propaganda and recruitment fliers, seeks donations to sustain the group's activities, attends demonstrations and rallies to further its agenda, and holds an annual national conference that typically converges with Hitler's birthday in April. Since 2008, NSM members have been arrested for a number of criminal offenses, including resisting arrest, weapons charges, disorderly conduct, gun possession, rape, and grand theft. In 1998, the group's former leader, Schoep, pleaded guilty to aiding and abetting a burglary. Currently, Schoep faces legal consequences for the violence that broke out during the 2017 Unite the Right rally, which are likely tied to his decision to step down from his leadership position with the NSM.

Venues Used for Communication

NSM members and supporters are active on a host of websites and social media platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, Gab, VKontakte, Telegram, and MeWe, as well as several other websites and forums. NSM members appear to interact with other white nationalist/supremacist groups on these platforms, particularly KKK-affiliated groups.

The group also operates its own website and radio broadcasting sites. Its official website—[nsm88\[.\]org](http://nsm88[.]org)—features official statements by the group's leaders, its online magazine, merchandise for sale, and propaganda fliers among other things. The group also runs the NSM88 Records music label.

Atomwaffen Division / National Socialist Order

Short History and Origins

Atomwaffen Division (AWD) was a neo-Nazi accelerationist group advocating for hastening the collapse of society, through violence, to rebuild a white ethnostate in its place. AWD is the German word for “nuclear weapon.” In 2013, Brandon Russell and Devon Arthurs formed AWD as a U.S.-based “Revolutionary National Socialist organization centered around political activism and the practice of an autonomous Fascist lifestyle.” The group spread and gained traction on Iron March, the now-defunct white supremacist forum (Bellingcat, 2019). On July 25, 2020, AWD reorganized as National Socialist Organization, claiming that the group will continue to follow neo-Nazi, anti-Semitic, and white nationalist ideologies “by any means necessary.” AWD/NSO is considered one of the most extreme and deadly neo-Nazi groups in the United States. Its members have plotted terrorist attacks and carried out five murders. Since 2017, 14 of the group's members—including its

two founders—have been arrested or convicted of separate charges, including firearms offenses, planning terrorist attacks, hate crimes, and murder. On March 9, 2020, the group released an audio recording claiming that it was officially disbanding in the United States in light of recent arrests and the Government’s crackdown on the group. Despite the group’s announcement, its influence within the accelerationist community remains. In February 2021, Canada designated AWD/NSO as a terrorist group.

Goals

AWD/NSO chatter and propaganda—including that of its affiliates—highlights its penchant for violence. Much of the propaganda idolizes far-right terrorists such as Anders Breivik, Robert Bowers, Dylann Roof, and Brenton Tarrant. The group adopted neo-Nazi James Mason’s “Siege culture” and follows the writings of American Nazi Party founder George Lincoln Rockwell (SPLC, 2021). AWD/NSO is also staunchly anti-Semitic, supports the Holocaust denial movement, and strongly opposes the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, (Questioning), and Others community.

AWD/NSO follows the insurrectionary strategy of “autonomous national socialist revolution” as presented in *SIEGE*, a collection of commentaries by neo-Nazi ideologue and founder of the Universal Order James Mason. On July 25, 2017, after AWD/NSO members made contact with Mason, he began collaborating with the group to relaunch *SIEGE* as an online newsletter. The key principles outlined in *SIEGE* are (a) complete detachment from and struggle against all legal, financial, and normative structures, collectively known as “the System,” and (b) a decentralized cell-based resistance movement (aka leaderless resistance) (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2020).

In late 2017, several influential AWD/NSO members began to advocate for the occult ideology of the pseudo-Satanic group Order of Nine Angles (O9A). According to O9A literature, the group advocates for culling, the practice of human sacrifice, as a rite of passage or duty.

Ideology, Symbolology, and Iconography

AWD/NSO use symbols common among neo-Nazi and accelerationist groups, including the Totenkopf (death’s head), the Black Sun, and the SS symbol:

- Totenkopf means skull and crossbones in German. The Totenkopf was an insignia used by the Nazi-German SS. The symbol was appropriated and heavily used by AWD/NSO.
- The Black Sun is a pre-Christian pagan symbol that was co-opted by occultists within the Nazi SS and is commonly used by neo-Nazis and white supremacist groups.
- SS represents the Nazi-German military and police organization, Schutzstaffel. The SS bolts—“卐”—are commonly used by neo-Nazis, accelerationists, racist skinheads, and other white supremacists.

The group's main logo is a Waffen SS division insignia shield featuring a trefoil—a warning symbol indicating radiation, referring to its name, Attomwaffen or nuclear weapon. The AWD flag features the group's main logo, the shield, surrounded by a garland/wreath with four yellow rays stretched out against the flag forming an "X" against a black backdrop (see Figure 2). The NSO logo features a sword overlaying a red swastika against a black backdrop.

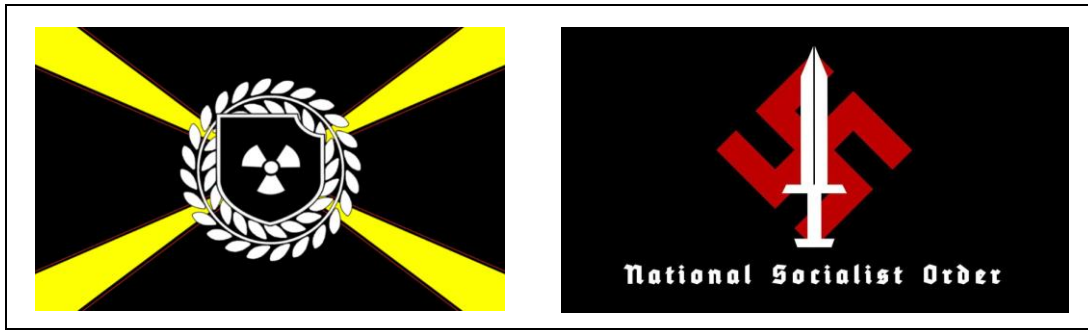


Figure 2: AWD Flag & NSO Logo

Estimated Size

Prior to disbanding, the group was estimated to have around 80 members spread across 20 cells in the United States. According to AWD/NSO chat logs that ProPublica obtained in 2018, “its largest chapters were in Washington, Virginia, and Texas” (Thompson et al., 2018). The group also had a high concentration of members in central Florida and various smaller chapters spread throughout Illinois, Massachusetts, New York, Kentucky, Alabama, Ohio, Missouri, and Oregon.

Analysts assess with moderate confidence that AWD/NSO’s membership is likely less than 25 people with less than a dozen meeting in person based on pictures shared on Telegram and the deterrence posed by the group’s vetting process.

Connections with Other Organizations

AWD reportedly had affiliates in Canada, Germany, and possibly Ukraine (Ware, 2019). Sonnenkrieg Division (SKD) likely serves as AWD’s European branch. AWD/NSO was affiliated—and senior members of the group were in direct contact—with SKD in the United Kingdom. Following AWD’s lead, SKD also disbanded on March 15, 2020.

The relationship between AWD and Feuerkrieg Division (FKD), another neo-Nazi accelerationist group, is uncertain. FKD chat logs leaked in March 2020 go back 8 months and reveal that although there was some membership overlap between the two groups, and FKD was certainly inspired by AWD/NSO, it appears they operated separately (Unicorn Riot, 2020).

Another neo-Nazi accelerationist group that espouses SIEGE culture—The Base—also overlaps with AWD/NSO. Members of AWD/NSO and The Base were previously pictured together holding up their groups’ respective flags, and some AWD members are reportedly also members of The Base. AWD/NSO members have also had direct contact and met with members of the British white supremacist group National Action (Bellingcat, 2019).

AWD/NSO maintains close ties with The American Futurist, an online neo-Nazi accelerationist publication founded in 2020 (American Futurist, 2020). The site promotes violence to support its goals, including hastening the collapse of American civilization to build a fascist, anti-modern, and anti-Jewish society. The publication’s list of contributors includes Mason, the AWD/NSO itself, and the cofounder of AWD/NSO, Brandon Russell.

Past and Current Activities

AWD/NSO members have engaged in recruitment and propaganda efforts online and at college campuses. These efforts have included the promotion of violence against minorities, a series of “hate camps,” and targeting of journalists in swatting campaigns; AWD/NSO is also responsible for five uncoordinated murders. The group posted neo-Nazi recruitment and anti-Semitic posters at six U.S. college campuses, and antagonized opposition groups such as Jewish communities and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, (Questioning), and Others by picketing vigils, as they did following the June 2016 Pulse nightclub shooting in Orlando, FL.

The group also held a series of training camps, or hate camps, in rural locations, namely a January 2018 hate camp in the Nevada desert. The camps are intended to prepare members for the coming collapse of society with trainings in guerrilla tactics and the use of weapons. Far-right extremists regularly share and distribute U.S. military manuals online, including a U.S. Army manual on improvised explosive devices, airborne operations field manual, combat pistol training handbook, and close quarters combat techniques. Training is often provided by former military service members (Ware, 2019).

Between 2017 and March 2020, 14 of the group’s members or suspected members were arrested or convicted of a host of separate charges, including firearms offenses, planning terrorist attacks, hate crimes, and murder. Three of the group’s members—including its co-founder Devon Arthurs—have been separately charged with the murder of five individuals.

Venues Used for Communication

AWD/NSO group members were active on the Iron March forum until it went offline in November 2017. Prior to its closure, the group relied on the Iron March forum to push its propaganda and communicate more broadly. Members also appeared on Twitter, Gab, and KiwiFarms. Until February 28, 2018, when YouTube began removing AWD/NSO content from its platform, the group posted numerous videos of its training camp and other propaganda. Popular neo-Nazi accelerationist Telegram channels also shared and distributed AWD/NSO propaganda fliers and videos. Since the creation of NSO in July 2020, supporters of the group have created two Telegram channels, published a manifesto, and are now seeking new members.

Proud Boys

Short History and Origins

The Proud Boys is a far-right group that advocates for free speech and harbors primarily conservative values but maintains a diverse group of members. In 2016, Gavin McInnes created the Proud Boys under the guise of a Western Chauvinist drinking club (ADL, 2020a). The name of the group was derived from a song, originally intended to be featured in Disney’s 1992 *Aladdin* film, called “Proud of Your Boy” (Coaston, 2020). In November 2018, Gavin McInnes publicly announced his dissociation from the group after the FBI designated the Proud Boys as an extremist group and Enrique Tarrio—the current leader of the Proud Boys Miami chapter—was appointed chairman of the group (Brean, 2018). Since the beginning of 2017, the Proud Boys have participated in multiple political rallies where members use force to further their ideology. The majority of these rallies have resulted in

violent clashes between members of the group and anti-fascists. Multiple members of the group were charged with conspiracy stemming from their involvement in the U.S. Capitol raid on January 6, 2021 (Lynch, 2021). During the first U.S. 2020 presidential debate, former President Trump mentioned the Proud Boys, which bolstered their recruitment numbers due to increased attention and focus on the group (Collins & Zadrozny, 2020). In February 2021, Canada designated the Proud Boys a terrorist group.

Goals

According to the primary Proud Boys website, the group adheres to the following tenets and values:

- Anti-Drug War
- Anti-Racism
- Minimal Government
- Maximum Freedom
- Pro-Free Speech
- Pro-Gun Rights
- Glorifying the Entrepreneur
- Reinstating a Spirit of Western Chauvinism
- Venerating the Housewife

According to 2020 Telegram posts made by the group’s chapters, the Proud Boys intend to reinstate the spirit of Western Chauvinism and ensure the sovereignty of the individual. Specific ideologies and goals differ by regional chapter (Proud Boys, 2020).

Ideology, Symbols, and Iconography

The Proud Boys harbor ideologies similar to those of other far-right extremist groups while claiming to eschew white nationalism and the alt-right. Due to their heavy presence at political protests, however, they are often suspected of being associated with neo-Nazi and far-right groups. The group has explicitly supported white nationalist groups. For instance, on September 14, 2020, the group promoted Patriot Front’s image of a banner drop in Philadelphia via one of their primary Telegram Channels. The Proud Boys logo, as shown in Figure 3, is a gold “PB” encompassed by laurel leaves.



Figure 3: Proud Boys Logos

Estimated Size

The Proud Boys has several thousand members and maintains chapters in almost every U.S. State (Keneally, 2018). The group maintains and follows a vetting process for its members, and often promotes propaganda on social media to facilitate recruitment. Most members are male, and the group excludes transgender and gender nonconforming individuals. In December 2020, the Proud Boys denounced its affiliation with the Proud Girls, an auxiliary wing to the group originally created in 2016.

Geographic Spread, Demographics

The Proud Boys has created multiple U.S.-based chapters, and has solidified an international presence with chapters in a variety of Canadian provinces, multiple European countries, and Asia. However, the majority of its members reside and operate within the United States. Some notable Proud Boys chapters include:

- Vice City (Miami, FL) Proud Boys: Led by Enrique Tarrío and considered the flagship chapter.
- Philadelphia Proud Boys: This chapter generated a fake protest coined “Belly of the Beast” in September 2020 to expose Antifa and their allegedly violent acts. Additionally, members of this chapter have often participated in protests. At least one member was charged with making terroristic threats toward a woman.
- New York Proud Boys: Members of this chapter were involved in a brawl with anti-fascists that occurred in October 2018 outside of a Republican-hosted event in New York City and resulted in violence.

Connections with Other Organizations

The Proud Boys has not explicitly announced its affiliation with other extremist organizations; however, over the past few years, members of the group have participated in a number of domestic protests where other groups were present. For instance, in August 2020, Proud Boys members and the far-right organization Patriot Prayer participated in the Back the Blue rally in Portland, OR

(Burley et al., 2021). More recently, on January 6, 2021, various Proud Boys members and individuals associated with the group raided the U.S. Capitol building alongside members of antigovernment militia groups, including the Three Percenters and the Oath Keepers (Diaz & Treisman, 2021).

Past and Current Activities

Since its inception, the Proud Boys has participated in and hosted a variety of notable right-wing and far-right political rallies across the United States and abroad. The group maintains a robust online presence on several social media platforms where it recruits members and promotes such events (Statt, 2018; Mosk & Osbourne, 2020). Additionally, the group maintains a merchandise-based website where it sells Proud Boys-related attire. Members often post stickers, posters, and flyers across cities where the group maintains a presence and is actively recruiting from (Buckley, 2020).

Most recently, Proud Boys members participated in the January 6, 2021, raid of the U.S. Capitol; multiple Proud Boys members were charged with conspiracy for their involvement. In late 2020, the Proud Boys hosted and participated in multiple protests including

- September 26, 2020: End Domestic Terrorism in Portland, OR;
- November 14, 2020: Million Make America Great Again March I in Washington, DC; and
- December 12, 2020: Million Make America Great Again March II in Washington DC.

Venues Used for Communication

During the Proud Boys' upbringing, members of the group were active on mainstream social media platforms such as Facebook; however, Facebook removed accounts related to the group in fall of 2018 and more recently in June 2020 (Statt, 2018; Mosk & Osborne, 2020). The group now operates on an amalgam of social media platforms, including Telegram, Gab, Parler, Twitter, YouTube, Dlive, Twitch, and Bitwave. The group also hosts a podcast called *WarBoysTV* with episodes aired on Dlive and BitWaveTV, where prominent members discuss new content relative to the group.

Boogaloo Movement

Short History and Origins

The term “boogaloo”—which alludes to the 1984 cult film *Breakin' 2: Electric Boogaloo*—emerged online in the mid-2010s (ADL, 2020b). The term was used by antigovernment militias and far-right extremist groups along with the terms RAHOWA (racial holy war), DOTR (day of the rope)—a term referring to the hanging of so-called race traitors, and Race War Now. Followers of the movement often refer to the boogaloo as a second American Civil War (aka Civil War 2: Electric Boogaloo). During a live-streamed standoff in 2019 between a U.S. Army veteran and police in Mahopac, NY, the gunman claimed the incident could start the boogaloo. After the incident militias, “patriots,” and gun rights advocates adopted the term and began to use it regularly on social media.

Despite the frequent conflation of several boogaloo movements—one preparing for “the apocalypse” and another planning for an armed uprising against a theoretical government confiscation of weapons—there is a fringe subset within the movement that promotes accelerationism. This fringe

poses real-world physical threats. As civil unrest persists around the world, accelerationists continue to devise plans to incite violence and attack targets to cause chaos. While identification of violent boogaloo supporters is complicated by the commonalities among the groups, it is aided by clear differences in the symbols, terms, and attire associated with the various ideologies.

Goals

The overarching goal for the boogaloo movement is to prepare for, or bring about, a second U.S. civil war. The boogaloo could conceptually begin with a violent act, like a successful attack against a government entity, including one similar to the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing. A government action perceived as infringing on citizens' rights, such as confiscation of firearms, is another commonly discussed theoretical trigger. Beto O'Rourke's September 2019 "hell yes" speech, where the politician claimed that the government will confiscate firearms, serves as the basis for many boogaloo propaganda videos and memes.

In preparation for the boogaloo, the movement is involved in the acquisition and stockpiling of weapons, ammunition, and survival gear. Boogaloo proponents also encourage adherents to prepare themselves physically and tactically by participating in military-style combat training and reading military field and doctrinal training manuals.

Ideology, Symbols, and Iconography

Ideology

The boogaloo movement is ideologically diverse and complex. Although it is commonly depicted as a white supremacist movement, the majority of the boogaloo movement aligns with so-called patriot ideologies. The movement's members view and label themselves as patriots, similar to Americans who fought against British rule in 1775. Patriots in the movement, similar to antigovernment militia groups, pledge to uphold and defend, to their death, the Constitution of the United States against "all enemies, foreign and domestic." In 2020, these factions—often armed—participated in demonstrations against COVID-19 restrictions, and in anti-police brutality and Black Lives Matter rallies.

Some segments of the movement adhere to an ideology aligned with white supremacy and accelerationism. The most violent and extreme boogaloo supporters continue to promote "taking action" to trigger a large-scale armed overthrow of governments—particularly the U.S. Government. Previously, a triggering event was perceived to be a physical attack against a government facility; this subset has used global protests against police brutality and racism to further the division between races, religions, law enforcement, and government entities and to hasten societal collapse.

Although boogaloo supporters follow varying ideologies, a majority of them can be identified by the attire and gear worn to demonstrations, including:

- Load-bearing vest with gun magazine pouches
- Body armor or "plate carriers"
- Kevlar helmets

- Night-vision goggles
- Camouflage fatigues and boots
- Rifles and pistols
- Hawaiian shirts

Iconography

Boogaloo supporters use coded language and memes to communicate, recruit, spread ideologies, and evade detection. The movement is fluid and is constantly adapting and developing new symbols, logos, and slogans. Among the most common and enduring symbols, so far, are the igloo, Hawaiian shirts, and hibiscus flowers (see Figure 4). The most common coded language and alternative names for boogaloo across the movement, are “Big Igloo”—phonetically sounds like boogaloo; “Big Luau”—wearing Hawaiian shirts stems from this term, which phonetically sounds like boogaloo; Boog; and Boojahideen.

Patches worn on shirts and gear may help identify which ideology a boogaloo supporter adheres to, such as:

- RWDS: An acronym for Right Wing Death Squad—an homage to armed fascist groups that historically conducted extrajudicial killings, particularly in Latin America; can be presented in many styles, including: the acronym alone, acronym within a shield, acronym with a silhouette of a Nazi-style stormtrooper;
- Schwarze Sonne (aka black sun, sunwheel, sonnenrad)—an ancient European symbol that the Nazi SS appropriated; (see Figure 5) and
- Totenkopf (aka death skull)—a symbol associated with Hitler's SS (see Figure 5).

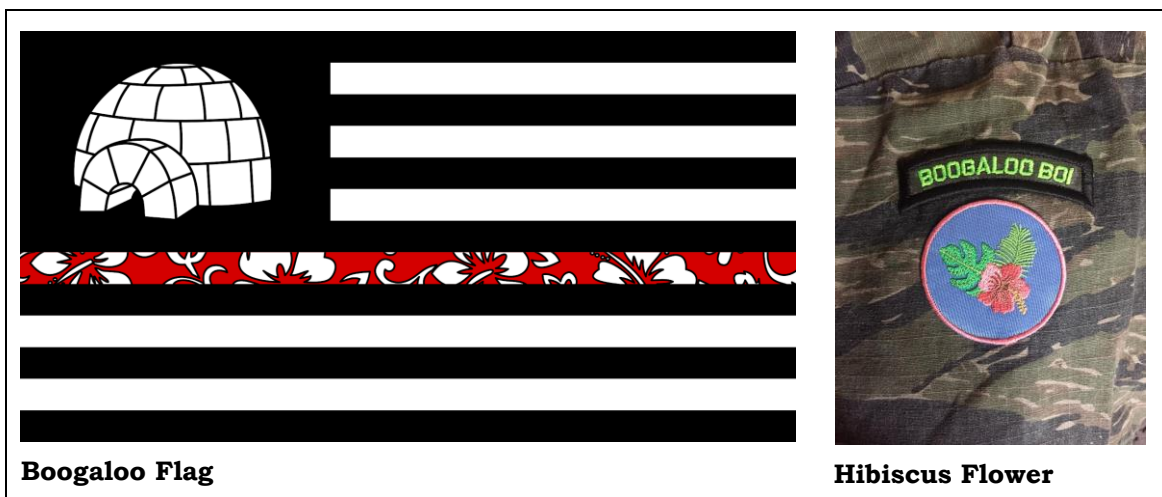


Figure 4 Boogaloo Movement Symbols

Estimated Size

There are no reported figures on the estimated size of the boogaloo movement. According to the number of followers on boogaloo-related groups and accounts, the movement has tens of thousands

of followers on social media platforms, including some Facebook groups that had 20,000 to 30,000 followers (Evans & Wilson, 2020).

Connections with Other Organizations

The boogaloo movement is broad and overlaps with various groups and movements, primarily antigovernment militia groups. Although the movement is composed of individuals whose ideologies and objectives differ from one another, the majority aligns with the broader “patriot” movement of defending U.S. constitutional rights, primarily gun rights. A boogaloo adherent can fairly seamlessly belong to one of several other extremist movements or groups that share one or more of their shared goals.

Past and Current Activities

Outside of online activity, the members of the boogaloo movement have participated in pro-gun-rights protests, anti-coronavirus lockdown rallies, and counter demonstrations at Black Lives Matter protests (ADL, 2020 October). The following are notable events and arrests pertaining to proponents of the boogaloo movement.

- June 5, 2020: Two individuals were arrested on charges of inciting a riot and aggravated breach of peace following a riot in Columbia, WI. Police released a statement claiming the individuals had connections to the boogaloo movement. Two other individuals, both wearing Hawaiian shirts, attire affiliated with the boogaloo movement, were also arrested on charges of breaking into a motor vehicle, looting, larceny, and possession of marijuana with intent to distribute (Roldan, 2020).
- June 3, 2020: Three individuals were indicted on charges of conspiracy to cause destruction during the May 16, 2020, ReOpen Nevada protest in Las Vegas, and possession of an unregistered destructive device (specifically, an improvised incendiary device commonly known as a Molotov cocktail). The group planned to set off explosives (fireworks and Molotov cocktails) to cause chaos and potentially lead to a violent response by demonstrators or police. Additionally, the group conducted reconnaissance on a park ranger station and a Nevada energy power substation near Lake Mead during the planning stages of attacking the facilities (Torres-Cortez, 2020).
- January 6, 2021: Members of the boogaloo movement participated in the raid on the U.S. Capitol, including the Virginia-based group, Last Sons of Liberty (Thompson & Fischer, 2021).
- April 11, 2020: Following an anonymous tip, Texas officials arrested a suspect during a social media live stream in which he filmed himself “hunting for red and blue lights” (police). The suspect was wearing a bulletproof vest that held a holstered pistol, ammunition magazines, and a rifle at the time of his arrest (US News 2020).
- October 2020: Thirteen people were arrested for allegedly plotting to kidnap Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer. The individuals involved in the plot were either members of, or had ties to, antigovernment militia and boogaloo groups, including Wolverine Watchmen (NBC News, 2020).

- January 6, 2021: Members of the boogaloo movement participated in the raid on the U.S. Capitol, including the Virginia-based group, Last Sons of Liberty (Thompson & Fischer, 2021).
- January 17, 2021: The boogaloo movement promoted the January 17, 2021, nationwide armed marches as peaceful demonstrations. On January 17, armed boogaloo members and antigovernment militia groups protested at State capitols in Michigan, Ohio, Oregon, and Texas to advocate for gun rights (*New York Times*, 2021).
- January 18, 2021: Armed boogaloo members attended the Virginia Citizens Defense League Lobby Day rally in Richmond, VA. A prominent member of the boogaloo movement, was present that day and previously made a call to arms for Virginia Citizens Defense League’s Lobby Day (Virginia Mercury, 2021).
- January 19, 2021: A boogaloo-affiliated MeWe group called for nationwide armed protests in U.S. State capital cities on January 30, 2021 (aka J30), and for subsequent monthly rallies.

Venues Used for Communication

The boogaloo movement’s origins can be traced to the social media site 4chan’s/k/board, which is dedicated to discussions about weapons (Evans & Wilson, 2020). However, the boogaloo movement mainly thrived on Facebook, becoming the most popular platform for the movement until Facebook removed hundreds of boogaloo accounts and groups in June 2020 (ADL, “Boogaloo Movement” 2020). Facebook’s purge forced the movement to either find other platforms or continue operating on Facebook by using evasion techniques such as coded language. Proponents of the boogaloo movement continue to operate, plan, and coordinate events and protests on a host of other social media platforms, including MeWe, Wimkin, Discord, Element (formerly Riot), YouTube, Twitter, and TikTok.

Unaffiliated White Supremacists

Short History and Origins

A number of cases have been documented of active and former military personnel with no ties to groups or organizations who ascribe to white supremacist ideology and engage in far-right extremist activity, the most notable being Timothy McVeigh, the perpetrator of the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing. Although white supremacists may be disenfranchised with the military and disagree with its engagements and interventions, they may join to receive proper combat or survival training and skills in preparation for what they believe to be an imminent “racial holy war” (aka RAHOWA) or the “boogaloo.” Boogaloo is a term accelerationists use to describe an armed revolution to collapse the current society and rebuild a white ethnostate in its place. Unlike the concept of a racial holy war, boogaloo specifically includes the acquisition and stockpiling of weapons, ammunition, and survival gear. Boogaloo proponents also encourage adherents to prepare themselves physically and tactically by participating in military-style combat training and reading military field manuals.

Ideology, Symbols, and Iconography

In 1983, Louis Beam, Jr., wrote the essay, *Leaderless Resistance*, which is well known among white supremacists and far-right extremists (ADL, 2013). Beam—a former member of the KKK and an

activist for Aryan Nations—wrote that to avoid U.S. Government disruption and infiltration into groups, white supremacists should do away with traditional organizations. Instead, individuals should adopt a cell system, which consists of very small cells that operate independently from any larger organization. The cells and organizations should avoid taking orders from anyone else in the movement, but should instead loosely coordinate their activities based on a shared information infrastructure of widely distributed “newspapers, leaflets, computers, etc.” (Berger, 2019). Beam also emphasized volume as imperative to the strategy because the FBI would be inundated with the demand to investigate “a thousand small phantom cells,” which “is an intelligence nightmare for a government” (SPLC, 2021). Similarly James Mason’s collection of publications, *SIEGE*, underscores Beam’s concept of leaderless resistance by emphasizing a decentralized cell-based resistance movement (Berger, 2019).

Individuals who ascribe to a white supremacist ideology often use and display the same references, icons, and symbology as white supremacist groups. Along with the imagery presented in Figure 5, common terms and icons include

- The 14 words: “We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children.”⁴
- 88: Represents the eighth letter of the alphabet “HH,” standing for “Heil Hitler.”
- Blut und Ehre (blood and honor): A popular Hitler Youth slogan.
- SS: represents the Nazi-German military and police organization. The SS bolts, “卐”, are also commonly used.
- ZOG: Acronym for Zionist Occupied Government, a common white supremacist belief that Jews control the U.S. Government.




 <p>Celtic Cross (ADL)</p>	 <p>Black Sun (Telegram)</p>	 <p>Totenkopf (ADL)</p>
<p><i>Description:</i> Although the Celtic Cross, a Christian symbol, may not denote white supremacists beliefs, white supremacists frequently use their version of this symbol.</p>	<p><i>Description:</i> German “Schwarze Sonne” (aka Black Sun): A symbol far-right groups appropriated from the Nazi-German SS.</p>	<p><i>Description:</i> Totenkopf (aka Death’s Head): A symbol appropriated from the Nazi-German SS.</p>

Figure 5: White Supremacist Symbols

⁴ Acronym referenced in the social media section on page 5.

Estimated Size

The scale of current and former military personnel who ascribe to white supremacist and white nationalist ideology is unknown. In 2019, *Military Times* conducted a survey of 1,630 active duty military personnel. Over 30% of respondents indicated they “personally witnessed white nationalism or ideologically-driven racism within the ranks” (Shane, 2020). While this finding does not speak directly to the scale of white supremacist activity and sentiment among Service members—one ideologically driven individual can adversely affect tens or hundreds of peers—it is notable that a significant number of respondents reported seeing behaviors consistent with extreme ideologies.

Connections with Other Organizations

Although unaffiliated white supremacists in the military may not be members of any group, some may attend meetings, participate in online chats and forums, and read literature produced by other groups. For instance, Timothy McVeigh attended a Southeast Michigan Volunteer Militia meeting months before carrying out the Oklahoma City bombing, but was not a member of the group.

Past and Current Activities

According to the previously referenced 2019 *Military Times* poll, respondents witnessed “racist language and discriminatory attitudes from peers...swastikas being drawn on Service members’ cars, tattoos affiliated with white supremacist groups, stickers supporting the KKK and Nazi-style salutes between individuals” (Shane, 2020). In 2010, a Marine Corps sniper team in Afghanistan posed in front of a Nazi SS flag (Koehler, 2019). As Figure 6 shows, the NSM posted an image of the group in its Summer/Fall 2012 edition of its *NSM Magazine* for propaganda purposes and replaced the Nazi SS symbol with the group’s logo.

FAMOUS 'BEFORE' AND 'AFTER' PHOTOS

A group of elite U.S. Marines was seen posing in front of an SS flag in Afghanistan some time ago. They received lots of flack from the brainwashed masses. To respect their privacy, we have shaded their eyes and faces. This is the 'before' photo.



After some wishful thinking, here is the 'after' photo...



Figure 6: Images of U.S. Marines Featured in the Summer/Fall 2012 Edition of the NSM Magazine

Much like AWD, Analysts have identified far-right extremists on Telegram sharing and distributing numerous U.S. military manuals online. This includes a U.S. Army manual on improvised explosive devices, airborne operations field manual, combat pistol training handbook, and close quarters combat techniques. It is important to note that the channels and individuals sharing these manuals are not confirmed to have military ties. This, however, demonstrates the admiration for and interest in military culture among far-right extremists.

Venues Used for Communication

Confirmed cases of white supremacists who are active or former military personnel demonstrate these actors' use of social media platforms to connect and engage with other like-minded individuals, and to post extremist content, including the use of Facebook, Telegram, and Discord. There are numerous individuals claiming to be currently enlisted with the military or to be veterans who actively post on known white supremacist forums and on far-right extremist channels and servers. While these individuals' current or past affiliation with the military could not be confirmed at the

writing of this research note, the consistent presence of military-themed posts and individuals claiming to be military show a clear desire by white supremacists and their sympathizers to legitimate their cause by creating a narrative that their and the military's goals are aligned.

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