



13 January 2021

## (U//FOUO) Domestic Violent Extremists Emboldened in Aftermath of Capitol Breach, Elevated Domestic Terrorism Threat of Violence Likely Amid Political Transitions and Beyond

### (U) Scope

(U//FOUO) This *Joint Intelligence Bulletin (JIB)* is intended to highlight the threat of violence from domestic violent extremists (DVEs) in the wake of the 6 January violent breach by some DVEs of the US Capitol Building in Washington, DC, following lawful protest activity related to the results of the General Election.<sup>a</sup> Anti-government or anti-authority violent extremists (AGAAVE), specifically militia violent extremists (MVEs);<sup>b,c</sup> racially or ethnically motivated violent extremists (RMVEs);<sup>d</sup> and DVEs citing partisan political grievances will very likely pose the greatest domestic terrorism threats in 2021. In 2021, threats and plotting of illegal activity, including destruction of property and violence targeting officials at all levels of the government, law enforcement, journalists, and infrastructure, as well as sporadic violence surrounding lawful protests, rallies, demonstrations, and other gatherings by DVEs will very likely increase due to renewed measures to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, socio-political conditions, and perceived government overreach. The FBI, DHS, and NCTC advise federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial government counterterrorism and law enforcement officials, and private sector security partners to remain vigilant in light of the persistent threat posed by DVEs and their unpredictable target selection in order to effectively detect, prevent, preempt, or respond to incidents and terrorist attacks in the United States.

<sup>a</sup> (U//FOUO) The FBI, DHS, and NCTC define a **domestic violent extremist** as an individual based and operating primarily within the United States or its territories without direction or inspiration from a foreign terrorist group or other foreign power who seeks to further political or social goals wholly or in part through unlawful acts of force or violence. The mere advocacy of political or social positions, political activism, use of strong rhetoric, or generalized philosophic embrace of violent tactics may not constitute extremism, and may be constitutionally protected.

<sup>b</sup> (U//FOUO) Anti-government or anti-authority violent extremism encompasses the potentially unlawful use or threat of force or violence, in furtherance of political and/or social agendas, which are deemed to derive from anti-government or anti-authority sentiment, including opposition to perceived economic, social, or racial hierarchies; or perceived government overreach, negligence, or illegitimacy.

<sup>c</sup> (U//FOUO) **Militia violent extremism** falls within the overarching domestic terrorism threat category of anti-government or anti-authority violent extremism. The FBI and DHS defines **militia violent extremists (MVEs)** as individuals who seek, wholly or in part through unlawful acts of force or violence, to further their belief that the US Government is purposely exceeding its Constitutional authority and is attempting to establish a totalitarian regime. Consequently, these individuals oppose many federal and state laws and regulations, particularly those related to firearms ownership. MVEs take overt steps to violently resist or facilitate the overthrow of the US Government. The mere advocacy of political or social positions, political activism, use of strong rhetoric, or generalized philosophic embrace of violent tactics may not constitute extremism and may be constitutionally protected.

<sup>d</sup> (U//FOUO) **Racially or ethnically motivated violent extremism** encompasses the potentially unlawful use or threat of force or violence, in furtherance of political and/or social agendas, which are deemed to derive from bias, often related to race or ethnicity, held by the actor against others, including a given population group.

IA-48719-21

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**(U//FOUO) The 6 January 2021 Violent Breach by DVEs of the US Capitol Building Very Likely Will Serve as an Enduring Driver for Violence by a Range of DVEs**

(U//FOUO) The 6 January 2021 violent breach by suspected DVEs into the US Capitol Building very likely will serve as a significant driver of violence for a diverse set of DVEs. Attendance at the lawful protest by ideologically diverse DVEs and others, the subsequent engagement of a sizeable group from that protest in the breach, and the death of an individual directly engaged in the breach very likely will serve to galvanize DVEs and increase collaboration primarily between MVEs and RMVEs, as well as DVEs who adhere to QAnon conspiracy theories.<sup>e,f</sup> These DVEs and others may also perceive the event as a step toward achieving their initiatives, and consider the death of a perceived like-minded individual as an act of martyrdom.<sup>g</sup> Some DVEs' view the 6 January event as a success, in conjunction with the potential to exploit follow-on lawful gatherings and ideological drivers—including conspiracy theories, such as QAnon—likely will also inspire some DVEs and others to engage in more sporadic, lone actor or small cell violence against common DVE targets, including racial, ethnic, or religious minorities and institutions, law enforcement, and government officials and buildings. Criminal activity by rioters targeting members of the media at the breach is also indicative of an increased and prolonged DVE threat of targeted violence against members of the press due to perceived complicity in a system hostile to their beliefs.

- » (U//FOUO) Shortly after 2:00PM on 6 January, multiple rioters broke windows, scaled walls, and forced entry into the US Capitol Complex. Rioters assaulted law enforcement, illegally entered congressional offices and chambers, and vandalized and stole property. Separately, two suspected improvised explosive devices (IEDs) were found on the US Capitol grounds and were rendered safe.
- » (U//FOUO) During the riot, an alleged QAnon-supporter who traveled to Washington, DC, engaged in lawful protests, entered the US Capitol illegally, and was shot by law enforcement as she attempted to gain access to a restricted area, subsequently succumbing to her injuries, according to open source reporting.

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<sup>e</sup> (U) According to open source research, the QAnon conspiracy theory refers to a complex primarily online community consisting of a persona known as “Q” whom disseminates information regarding multiple, related conspiracies in a web forum. The conspiracies revolve around a belief that corrupt “global elites” and “deep state” actors are engaged in ongoing plots in an attempt to conduct a coup against the 45th President of the United States. These elites are frequently alleged to have committed several crimes, including but not limited to large-scale election fraud and child sexual abuse.

<sup>f</sup> (U//FOUO) The information in this JIB is provided to inform law enforcement of the role any referenced conspiracy theories may play in mobilizing criminal actors and DVEs to violence. Generating, accessing, discussing, or otherwise interacting with content related to the conspiracy theories mentioned in this product without engaging in violence or other criminal activity may be legal and protected by the First Amendment. The FBI does not investigate, collect, or maintain information on US persons solely for the purpose of monitoring First Amendment-protected activities.

<sup>g</sup> (U) The perception that deaths of like-minded individuals at the hands of law enforcement were unjust has historically been a significant driver for DVEs. DVEs have seized on the deaths of two US persons Vicki and Samuel Weaver at Ruby Ridge, Idaho in 1992; US persons at the Branch Davidians compound at Waco, Texas in 1993; and US person Duncan Lemp in 2020 to justify threats against law enforcement and government officials.

- » (U//FOUO) Some participants active at the Capitol displayed insignias used or adopted by multiple DVEs, including three percenters (III%) and other MVE symbols—the Confederate flag and symbols associated with neo-Nazis—popular with RMVEs.<sup>h</sup> Nooses and plastic restraints were carried or stationed at or near the Capitol by some rioters, possibly to demonstrate their intent to cause harm to government officials. Symbols associated with QAnon conspiracy theories were also displayed by some rioters.
- » (U) During rioting on the Capitol grounds, individuals pursued and threatened journalists, according to open source reporting. Rioters destroyed or stole cameras and other media equipment outside the Capitol, and the phrase, “Murder the media,” was found scratched into a door within the Capitol.

### **(U//FOUO) Diverse Range of DVEs Very Likely to Mobilize in an Effort to Target Elected Officials and Government Buildings with Violence Following Perceived Political Shifts**

(U//FOUO) Amplified perceptions of fraud surrounding the outcome of the General Election and the change in control of the Presidency and Senate—when combined with long-standing DVE drivers such as perceived government or law enforcement overreach, and the anticipation of legislation perceived by some DVEs to oppose or threaten their beliefs—very likely will lead to an increase in DVE violence. Additionally, narratives surrounding the perceived success of the 6 January breach of the US Capitol, and the proliferation of conspiracy theories will likely lead to an increased DVE threat towards representatives of federal, state, and local governments across the United States, particularly in the lead-in to the 20 January Presidential Inauguration. The targeting of government buildings and officials is consistent with observed activity in 2020, when armed individuals, including DVEs, threatened elected officials and occupied state government buildings.

- » (U//FOUO) In October 2020, FBI investigations resulted in the arrests of 14 MVEs on charges related to an alleged conspiracy to kidnap the Governor of Michigan before the November elections due to perceived abuses of power pertaining to her response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Over several months, the MVEs conducted surveillance, tactical training, and recruitment activities, and made efforts to procure and test IEDs in support of this conspiracy. The MVEs also considered attacks on the Michigan State Capitol and law enforcement.
- » (U//FOUO) On 10 November 2020, a New York-based MVE was arrested for alleged threats to kill politicians, law enforcement, and lawful protesters. Two days after the November elections, the MVE allegedly posted to social media, “The carnage needs to come in the form of extermination of anyone that claims to be democrat.” He subsequently posted “nothing is off the table” regarding a Democratic Senator and wrote, “The Turner Diaries must come to life.” The MVE also indicated wanting to attack the FBI building and unspecified federal agencies.<sup>i</sup>

<sup>h</sup> (U//FOUO) Militia violent extremists sometimes call themselves three percenters (III%) based on the myth that only three percent of American colonists took up arms against the British during the Revolutionary War. Some III%ers regard the present-day US Government as analogous to British authorities during the Revolution in terms of infringements on civil liberties. The term generally represents the perception that a small force with a just cause can overthrow a tyrannical government if armed and prepared.

<sup>i</sup> (U) *Turner Diaries* is a 1978 novel by William Luther Pierce that depicts a violent white revolution in the United States that leads to the overthrow of the federal government, a nuclear war, and, ultimately, a race war which leads to the systematic extermination of non-whites. All groups opposed by the novel's protagonist, Earl Turner, including Jews, non-whites, “liberal actors” and politicians, are exterminated. The novel includes the bombing of the FBI Headquarters building.

- » (U//FOUO) Since the 6 January event, violent online rhetoric regarding the 20 January Presidential Inauguration has increased, with some calling for unspecified “justice” for the 6 January fatal shooting by law enforcement of a participant who had illegally entered the Capitol Building, and another posting that “many” armed individuals would return on 19 January, according to open source reporting. The recent removal efforts by social media platforms used by DVEs may push some to revert back to other platforms they perceive as more secure, further challenging our ability to identify and warn of specific threats.
- » (U//FOUO) The increasing prevalence and influence of conspiracy theories based on a belief in the existence of global or “deep state” actors who work to manipulate various social, political, and/or economic conditions of the United States very likely serves as a driver of some DVE violence. Some rioters at the 6 January breach were alleged supporters of QAnon conspiracy theories, according to open source reporting. Other DVEs may be motivated to target government officials and buildings because of similar theories, including the “Great Reset.”<sup>i</sup>

### **(U//FOUO) Range of DVE Actors Very Likely to Pose Increasing Threat of Violence at Lawful Protests, Rallies, Demonstrations, and Other Gatherings in 2021**

(U//FOUO) The violent breach of the US Capitol Building is very likely part of an ongoing trend in which DVEs exploit lawful protests, rallies, demonstrations, and other gatherings to carry out ideologically-motivated violence and criminal activity. Throughout 2020, DVEs with differing ideological goals and perspectives exploited such events to promote, organize, conspire, and plot lethal violence against ideological opponents and other targets of their grievances. DVEs’ capability and intent to engage in violence at lawful gatherings very likely will increase throughout 2021, as some DVEs perceive increased socio-political pressures following the Presidential Inauguration. Under these conditions, and with the perception among some DVEs that the breach of the US Capitol Building was a significant advance toward achieving their ideological goals, DVEs may be inspired to carry out more violence, including violence against racial, ethnic, and religious minorities and associated institutions, journalists, members of the LGBTQ+ community, and other targets common among some DVEs. Such perceived pressures may stem from, but not be limited to, one or more of the following factors:

- » (U//FOUO) The potential for shifts in various policies many DVEs may perceive to oppose or threaten their ideological goals and agendas, or feed into existing narratives or conspiracy theories many DVEs subscribe to regarding the US government’s exercise of power, influence, and initiatives: possibly including gun control legislation, the easing of immigration restrictions, and new limits on the use of public land.
- » (U//FOUO) Ongoing false narratives by DVEs that the 2020 General Election was illegitimate, or fraudulent, and the subsequent belief its results should be contested or unrecognized.
- » (U//FOUO) Some DVEs’ discontent, or general concerns, with renewed measures to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, the ordered dissemination of COVID-19 vaccinations, and the efficacy and/or safety of COVID-19 vaccinations.

<sup>i</sup> (U) According to open source research, the Great Reset conspiracy theory is based upon the World Economic Forum’s May 2020 plan to rebuild the global economy following the ongoing global pandemic. Adherents believe “global financial elites” and world leaders intentionally disseminated the COVID-19 virus to warrant a large-scale restructuring of the global-political economy. This restructuring is believed by some to be for the purpose of creating a totalitarian regime, or New World Order.

**(U) Outlook**

(U//FOUO) The FBI, DHS, and NCTC remain concerned about the potential for a loosely organized, sustained, and significant DVE population mobilizing to violence based on social media calls to target government infrastructure or officials. The shared false narrative of a “stolen” election and opposition to the change in control of the executive and legislative branches of the federal government may lead some individuals to adopt the belief that there is no political solution to address their grievances and violent action is necessary. Additionally, in-person engagement between DVEs of differing ideological goals during the Capitol breach likely served to foster connections, which may increase DVEs’ willingness, capability, and motivation to attack and undermine a government they view as illegitimate.<sup>k</sup>

(U//FOUO) In the near term, DVEs could exploit upcoming events to engage in or justify violence, including events attended by MVEs and “boogaloo”<sup>l</sup> adherents scheduled nationally from 16 to 20 January; the 20 January Presidential Inauguration and associated events in Washington, DC; and any departure of the 45th President from office prior to the end of his term. The “boogaloo” is a concept most commonly used by DVEs, particularly MVEs, to reference an impending second civil war or insurgency against the US Government. Calls for revolution may especially resonate with MVEs, who often justify violence based on their belief that they are guardians of the Constitution and the legacies of the American Revolution. While they may not necessarily share the partisan views of those who engaged in the 6 January breach, MVEs and other DVEs who adhere to the “boogaloo” concept and seek a politically motivated civil war, and RMVEs who seek a race war may exploit the aftermath of the Capitol breach by conducting attacks to destabilize and force a climactic conflict in the United States. These factors, and the broad perception among DVEs that the violent breach was successful, may contribute to DVEs’ willingness to carry out sporadic, lone actor or small cell violence. Such DVE violence may be targeted against racial, ethnic, and/or religious minorities and associated institutions, journalists, members of the LGBTQ+ community, and other targets common among some DVEs.

(U//FOUO) Ongoing law enforcement efforts to arrest individuals who participated in the 6 January Capitol breach could deter some DVEs, and lead others to adjust their tactics and to lessen law enforcement scrutiny. Existing trends in some DVEs’ transition to what they perceive as more secure online communication platforms to discuss threat activity following increased law enforcement scrutiny very likely will continue. Law enforcement may seek to disrupt DVEs prior to any potential violence based on their pre-mobilization illegal activities, including charges related to explosives; illegal or illegally modified weapons; unlawful use of restricted firearm components; and unlawful possession of firearms, ammunition, or body armor by prohibited possessors. Law enforcement may also leverage state and local laws and ordinances that limit or restrict paramilitary activities of private militias. The FBI, DHS, and NCTC urge state and local authorities, to promptly report suspicious activities related to potential domestic violent extremism. The FBI, DHS, and NCTC note that, due to the highly personal nature of radicalization to violence, it is difficult to assess specific indicators that are indicative of US-based violent extremists attempting to support violence at home or abroad.

<sup>k</sup> (U) Targeted attacks on identified elected and party officials based upon their political opinions would be similar to attacks observed in the last five years including the 2017 attempted assassination of Republican members of Congress on a baseball field in Virginia, or two assassinations by violent extremists espousing a belief in white supremacy targeting a British member of Parliament, and a German political party official.

<sup>l</sup> (U) According to open source research, the original boogaloo meme references the 1984 film, *Breakin’ 2: Electric Boogaloo*. Mainstream culture adopted the phrase “electric boogaloo” to comment on follow-on or repeat events in pop- and political-culture, such as re-elections. MVEs use the boogaloo derivative of the phrase to refer to a second Civil War, i.e. American Civil War 2: Electric Boogaloo. Proponents cultivated the meme by sharing images, videos, and rhetoric. “Big igloo,” “Big luau,” “Boog Bois,” “Boojahideen,” and other associated word-play in addition to imagery such as igloos, Hawaiian shirts, and leis, are used as coded references to the larger boogaloo phenomenon on-and offline.

**(U) Related Products**

(U//FOUO) For additional information regarding threats from DVEs, please refer to the below intelligence products:

- » (U//FOUO) Joint Intelligence Bulletin, “Multi-State Disruption of Militia Violent Extremist Plot to Kidnap Governor of Michigan,” released 16 October 2020.
- » (U//FOUO) Joint Intelligence Bulletin, “Militia Extremists Present Elevated Threat to Law Enforcement and Government Personnel,” released on 18 June 2020.

**(U) Report Suspicious Activity**

**(U) To report suspicious activity, law enforcement, Fire-EMS, private security personnel, and emergency managers should follow established protocols; all other personnel should call 911 or contact local law enforcement.** Suspicious activity reports (SARs) will be forwarded to the appropriate fusion center and FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force for further action. For more information on the Nationwide SAR Initiative, visit <http://nsi.ncirc.gov/resources.aspx>.

**(U) Administrative Note: Law Enforcement Response**

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**(U) Tracked by:** HSEC-8.1, HSEC-8.2, HSEC-8.5, HSEC-8.8



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| <input type="checkbox"/> Allocate resources (e.g. equipment and personnel)                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Develop long-term homeland security strategies |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reprioritize organizational focus   | <input type="checkbox"/> Do not plan to use                             |
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