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NJOHSP

EXECUTIVE INTELLIGENCE BRIEF

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Online Platforms Provide Refuge for White Supremacist Extremists

Historically, white supremacist extremists have leveraged alternative social media platforms to espouse their ideologies, interact with like-minded individuals online, and attempt to radicalize others.

On October 27, Robert Bowers, a suspected white supremacist extremist who espoused anti-Semitic comments online, shot and killed 11 people and injured six at a synagogue in Pittsburgh.

- Prior to the attack, Bowers posted on Gab, a social media website that claims it is a free-speech alternative to Facebook and Twitter, that the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society “likes to bring invaders in that kill our people. I can’t sit by and watch my people get slaughtered. Screw your optics, I’m going in.” Additionally, Bowers shared other anti-Semitic and xenophobic content online, including a picture with the numbers “1488,” a numeric combination popular with white supremacists.



Authorities respond to Tree of Life Congregation Synagogue in Pittsburgh on October 27, 2018.

- Started in 2008, the now defunct website, IronMarch, served as an international online fascist forum, which provided users the ability to interact, discuss topics related to white supremacy, and spread propaganda. In May 2017, authorities arrested Brandon Russell for illegally storing explosive materials in his apartment and allegedly planning to blow up critical infrastructure. Russell was a frequent user of IronMarch and connected with like-minded individuals in the United States through the website.
- In 2015, Dylann Roof shot and killed nine individuals and wounded one at a historically black church in Charleston, South Carolina, stating he hoped the attack would ignite a race war in the country. Prior to the shooting, Roof self-radicalized online and interacted with members of various white supremacist extremist forums. Before the attack, Roof stated online, “someone has to have the bravery to take it to the real world, and ... it has to be [him].”

There are no known or credible threats to New Jersey’s Jewish community because of the attack in Pennsylvania. However, this tragic incident highlights the importance of reporting suspicious activity. NJOHSP can be contacted by calling 1-866-4-SAFE-NJ or by emailing tips@njohsp.gov.

Additional Resources

[Religious Facilities Resource Sheet](#)

[White Supremacist Extremists Continue to Leverage Social Media](#)