



MILITIA EXTREMISTS

Background

- Militia extremists view the federal government as an existential threat to the rights and freedoms of Americans. They judge armed resistance as necessary to preserve these rights and justify the use of violence to counter perceived threats or violations to the US Constitution.
- The movement gained national attention following standoffs with federal agents in the early 1990s at Ruby Ridge, Idaho, and Waco, Texas. These confrontations provided the inspiration for the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995 that killed 168 individuals and injured more than 680 others.
- Since 2017, militia extremists have shifted focus from anti-government issues, including standoffs with the federal government, to confronting illegal immigration and perceived threats. While the militia movement has historically been decentralized, several groups have formed in recent years with a structured hierarchy and national leadership.



Georgetown Law Center, along with the city of Charlottesville, Virginia, filed suit against the Pennsylvania Light Foot Militia, New York Light Foot Militia, and the III% People's Militia of Maryland for their participation in the "Unite the Right" rally in 2017, based on Virginia law that prevents private military organizations from operating as a security force within the state. The groups entered a consent agreement that prevents their return to the city for future protests. While members of the New Jersey III% militia (pictured) attended the rally, the group was not named in the lawsuit.

Threat to New Jersey: Moderate

There is currently a limited amount of militia extremist activity within New Jersey; however, militia extremists continue to participate in violent protests across the United States and threaten Muslim populations throughout the region.

- Militia members from at least 35 states, including New Jersey, traveled to Charlottesville, Virginia, in August 2017 for the "Unite the Right" rally, according to the Anti-Defamation League. The group claimed it was providing security for the event but was not authorized by state or local law enforcement to do so.
- In 2015, Jon Ritzheimer, an anti-Islam activist and self-proclaimed member of the Three Percenters, issued threats against a "Muslim Day" event at Six Flags Great Escape in Jackson Township (Ocean County). Militia members commented on his social media post, inciting violence and stating their intent to bomb Six Flags while Muslims were inside. That same year, Ritzheimer posted a video on Facebook where he claimed to be traveling from Arizona to New York to confront an Islamic newspaper that had published an article critical of him. He also stated, "We're going to stop at virtually every mosque along the way," brandished a handgun, and threatened Muslims in the video. In 2017, a judge sentenced Ritzheimer to one year and one day in federal prison for participating in the 2016 Malheur National Wildlife Refuge occupation.



Jon Ritzheimer, a self-described Three Percenter militia member, has made threats toward Muslims in New Jersey and the surrounding region.

US Nexus

- In April 2019, the FBI arrested Larry Hopkins of Flora Vista, New Mexico, and charged him with being a felon in possession of firearms and ammunition. Hopkins was the leader of the United Constitutional Patriots (UCP), an armed group that conducted patrols along the US-Mexico border. He allegedly stated the UCP was training to assassinate philanthropist George Soros, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, and former President Barack Obama because he believed they support Antifa.



Larry Hopkins, the leader of the United Constitutional Patriots

- In January 2019, two members of the White Rabbit Militia pleaded guilty to bombing a Minnesota mosque in August 2017, admitting they wanted to scare Muslims out of the country. The two members threw a pipe bomb through a window of the mosque that exploded, causing extensive damage but no injuries. The militia group also attacked an Illinois abortion clinic in November 2017 using similar tactics, but the pipe bomb in that instance failed to explode. The group's leader, Michael Hari, of Clarence, Illinois, is accused of planning the attacks and is awaiting trial.
- That same month, a judge sentenced three members of a Kansas-based militia group to 25 to 30 years in federal prison for a 2016 plot targeting local Muslim residents. The three members referred to themselves as the "Crusaders" and planned to bomb an apartment complex in Garden City, Kansas, where Somali immigrants resided and worshipped at a mosque. An FBI informant recorded the group's leader, Patrick Stein, stating that Muslim immigrants were "cockroaches" that needed to be exterminated.

Additional Resources

[2020 Terrorism Threat Assessment Escalating Violence During Protests](#)