



U.S. Department of Justice

Federal Bureau of Investigation

Washington, D. C. 20535-0001

May 29, 2020

The Honorable Bennie G. Thompson
Chairman
Committee on Homeland Security
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Cedric Richmond
Chairman
Subcommittee on Cybersecurity Infrastructure,
Protection, & Innovation
Committee on Homeland Security
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Thompson and Chairman Richmond:

This responds to your letter, dated December 17, 2019, to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) regarding Racially or Ethnically Motivated Violent Extremism (RMVE). We apologize for the delay in responding to your letter.

In late 2017, the FBI discontinued using the term "Black Identity Extremism." As a result, the FBI's Consolidated Strategy Guide for Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 does not use that term, and the only reference to the term in the FY2019 Consolidated Strategy Guide is a footnote indicating that the term is no longer utilized by the FBI. As detailed below, the FBI has updated its terminology and currently uses the term "Racially or Ethnically Motivated Violent Extremism."

The FBI continually challenges, reviews, and evaluates intelligence to ensure the appropriate identification and categorization of each threat. This is an iterative process, based on analysis of a threat's impact and mitigation efforts, and is refreshed annually. During the annual review in 2018, the FBI's Counterterrorism Division elected to revise the categories of domestic

The Honorable Bennie G. Thompson
The Honorable Cedric Richmond
Page Two

terrorism threats emanating from those who use or promote violence to further one of many ideologies rooted in racial bias. The term “Racially or Ethnically Motivated Violent Extremism” came about as a result of intelligence analysts identifying similar characteristics in the driving factors of the threat actors involved across ideological lines. Discussions with Special Agents in Charge and subject matter experts from FBI Field Offices across the country, combined with input from management at FBI Headquarters, ultimately led the FBI to this decision. As such, for the last two years, the FBI has described domestic terrorism threat actors motivated by an ideological justification for violence related to race and ethnicity as RMVEs. The FBI has considered and continues to consider violent extremism motivated by any racial bias a high priority. In fact, this threat is one the FBI considers among the most serious terrorism threats posed to the United States.

Of note, in early 2019, the FBI engaged directly with the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement (NOBLE) Executive Board to explain the FBI’s internal review process that resulted in the terminology change and to request their feedback as critical law enforcement partners. One of the FBI’s senior executives later spoke at a NOBLE conference regarding these updated threat categories. The FBI also offered to provide a similar briefing to the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) in early 2019.

The FBI believes RMVE is an appropriate term because it focuses on violence and motivation in order to label the threat, rather than any First Amendment-protected activity. In consultation with United States Intelligence Community partners and other partners at the National Security Council, the FBI has attempted to effectively integrate all types of racially or ethnically motivated violence into one threat category that allows the FBI to comprehensively mitigate the threat. This revised category allows the FBI to address the current threat and to evolve based upon emerging trends.

Threat-naming conventions do not compromise the FBI’s ability to understand, report on, and counter sub-sections of this threat category. For example, as FBI executives and subject matter experts have noted in congressional briefings and hearings, slightly more than half of the FBI’s domestic terrorism investigations at any given time are classified as RMVE cases. Analysis and records demonstrate that the vast majority are racially or ethnically motivated violent extremists who advocate violence in furtherance of a perceived superiority of the white race. In the first quarter of FY2020, approximately half of the FBI’s domestic terrorism disruptions were arrests of RMVEs, and all but one of those were racially or ethnically motivated violent extremists who advocated violence in furtherance of a perceived superiority of the white race. With all threat categories, the FBI continually assesses and evaluates trends in the motivations and targets of like-minded threat actors. This keeps the FBI agile in the critical effort to identify domestic terrorists and their mobilization to violence, and helps the organization to look beyond the current threat with the goal of preventing future threats.

The Honorable Bennie G. Thompson
The Honorable Cedric Richmond
Page Three

Preventing all acts of terrorism against the Homeland remains the FBI's number one priority. The FBI commits to continuing to confront the threat posed by all terrorism, from any place, by any actor, with determination and dedication to the FBI's mission to protect the American people and uphold the Constitution of the United States.

Thank you for your support of the FBI, its mission, and its people.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "Jill C. Tyson", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jill C. Tyson
Assistant Director
Office of Congressional Affairs