



# COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Subcommittee Hearing Statement of Chairman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS)**  
***Racially and Ethnically Motivated Violent Extremism: The Transnational Threat***  
**April 29, 2021**

We are here today to talk about Racially and Ethnically Motivated Violent Extremists or RMVEs.

Last month, the Director of National Intelligence published a report on the heightened threat posed by domestic violent extremists. The report warned that U.S.-based RMVE actors “who promote the superiority of the white race” possess the most “persistent and concerning transnational connections” because they “frequently communicate with and seek to influence each other.” The Department of Homeland Security’s Homeland Threat Assessment, or HTA, released in the fall also called attention to this concern.

The HTA acknowledged that white supremacist extremists have conducted outreach abroad to spread their message, increasing the risk of mobilization to violence and travel to conflict zones. White supremacist RMVE actors are often inspired by the acts of likeminded individuals abroad. They exchange tactics and techniques for their violent plots, and they have even set up or inspired the creation of affiliate groups.

It is time for our treatment of foreign RMVE threats to be consistent with how we treat other foreign terrorist threats. When we faced this same challenge in the context of al-Qaeda, the Islamic State, Homegrown Violent Extremists, and other Sunni and Shia jihadists, the U.S. Government and private sector partners rose to the occasion to combat the threat. Indeed, our legal and counterterrorism tools are different for domestic actors as opposed to international ones. However, the individuals, groups, and movements we are here to speak about today possess concrete links overseas.

For instance, several of the individuals associated with the Rise Above Movement—a California-based white supremacist group—who were initially charged for violence during the deadly Charlottesville rally, appear to have traveled to Europe to meet with members of European white supremacist extremist groups. More recently, the FBI is reportedly probing whether foreign governments, groups, or individuals funded some January 6 Capitol rioters using Bitcoin.

The January 6 attack will undoubtedly serve as a watershed moment for RMVE actors across the globe—and we cannot ignore how the event is affecting our allies and others abroad. And as COVID-19 protocols begin to loosen, we must be forward thinking about how RMVE actors might again engage in travel and lead to a greater risk of violence. By not taking action or taking inconsistent action—whether by failing to prioritize the threat, educate the public on it, or using the tools we have at our disposal to counter it—we condone the actions of white supremacists at home and abroad.

We must abandon our traditional passive approach to this issue and instead be creative in our solutions. And we can do these things while upholding the Constitution. This Subcommittee held a similar joint hearing on this topic last Congress with non-governmental subject matter experts. This time, it is great to have DHS and the State Department in front of us to talk about the issue—specifically how they are prioritizing it and what they are doing to combat it.

Before I conclude, I would be remiss if I did not express my disappointment that the report required in Section 5602 of the fiscal year 2020 National Defense Authorization Act—which would provide policymakers and the public with extensive domestic and international terrorism data—is now more than 10 months past due. This data is crucial for Members of Congress to accurately understand the threat and effectively legislate on it. I would request that our DHS witness provide us with an update on the status of this report today.

I look forward to having a productive conversation on this topic and working with both Departments on solutions.

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