



COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

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Hearing Statement of Intelligence & Counterterrorism Subcommittee Chairman Max Rose (D-NY)

Assessing the Threat from Accelerationists and Militia Extremists

July 16, 2020

This hearing will look at a range of violent anti-government actors, movements, and organizations, highlighting recent threats from militia extremists and accelerationists, including the Boogaloo movement, who seek to accelerate society toward violent collapse. Some of these extremist movements stem from ideologies that are decades old. Others are relatively new. These threats range from decentralized and leaderless accelerationist networks to more structured militia groups.

Anti-government extremism is one of the common threads—but we often see overlap with anti-immigrant, anti-Semitic, anti-Black, anti-Muslim ideologies as well, bringing these extremists into common cause with white supremacists. Today, we have an opportunity to discuss the current threat landscape from these movements so we can develop an understanding of how they have flourished in our communities and in online spaces.

The Boogaloo movement has been thrust into the spotlight in recent months as we have seen attack after attack, arrest after arrest, of men affiliated with the Boogaloo movement. Too often, our brave law enforcement officers have been the target of their violence.

In April, a man in Texas was arrested after streaming himself on Facebook Live searching for a law enforcement officer to ambush. In May and June, a man in California shot and killed a Department of Homeland Security Federal Protective Service officer and wounded one more, and then went on to kill a Santa Cruz County police officer before being apprehended. He wrote the word “Boog” in blood after carrying out the second murder.

Also in May, three men were arrested in Nevada, in possession of Molotov cocktails, while reportedly on their way to incite violence at a Black Lives Matter protest in Las Vegas. In June, a man in Oklahoma was arrested and found to be in possession of an illegally modified machinegun, homemade grenades, and Molotov cocktails. All of these men appear to be connected to the Boogaloo movement.

Even in my home state of New York, a man in Troy who had posted Boogaloo content online was arrested for carrying a loaded ghost gun—a gun without a serial number—in June. In Ranking Member Walker’s home state of North Carolina, Boogaloo boys came armed to protests in Greensboro and Asheboro at the beginning of June. Some of these incidents ended in lethal violence. Others were stopped before that point. All of these incidents underscore the danger of the movements in front of us today.

Experts, like the ones testifying today, have highlighted the fact that the Boogaloo movement is complex and changing. The terminology they use, the images they use, and their organizing tactics are in flux. This unique challenge for policymakers and law enforcement alike will require thoughtful and innovative solutions—solutions that won’t, in turn, fan the flames of these extremists’ recruitment efforts. This

challenge is also an opportunity: we must look hard at the roots of the problem, to identify ways to address the causes of this violence rather than just its symptoms.

It's important that we don't lose sight of the ways in which accelerationist movements, like Boogaloo, intersect and overlap with other extremist movements. Popular white supremacist groups like The Base and Atomwaffen are also accelerationist groups. These overlapping ideologies risk inspiring the next generation of extremist actors seeking to commit acts of violence in the U.S. and abroad. And as law enforcement officers continue to be one of their top targets, it's critical that the Department of Homeland Security and other federal agencies dedicate resources and attention to informing and educating state and local law enforcement about these threats.

It's also vital that we understand these movements are not evolving in a vacuum. And, particularly in an election year, we can't disregard the risk that anti-government extremists—either wittingly or unwittingly—may latch on to narratives and conspiracies propagated by Russia and other adversaries who seek to further social divisions. It is important that when we examine these online and amorphous networks, we are aware of the dangers of malign foreign influence campaigns.

In this same vein, there is undoubtedly a shared responsibility between the private and public sectors to address these online threats. This means taking a hard look at whether social media companies follow their own policies and procedures about extremist content. This also includes taking down Boogaloo and other accelerationist content, like Facebook and Discord recently did.

However, more work needs to be done. Coalition groups like the new Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism, which recently named Nick Rasmussen as its inaugural executive director, should be at the forefront of coordinating and responding to these threats so they don't have a home anywhere online. I look forward to a conversation from this distinguished panel of experts discussing how to best understand this threat and respond to it.

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