

**The attached analysis, entitled PROJECT MEGIDDO, is an FBI strategic assessment of the potential for domestic terrorism in the United States undertaken in anticipation of or response to the arrival of the new millennium.**



# PROJECT MEGIDDO

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**For over four thousand years, MEGIDDO, a hill in northern Israel, has been the site of many battles. Ancient cities were established there to serve as a fortress on the plain of Jezreel to guard a mountain pass. As Megiddo was built and rebuilt, one city upon the other, a mound or hill was formed. The Hebrew word "Armageddon" means "hill of Megiddo." In English, the word has come to represent battle itself. The last book in the New Testament of the Bible designates Armageddon as the assembly point in the apocalyptic setting of God's final and conclusive battle against evil. The name "Megiddo" is an apt title for a project that analyzes those who believe the year 2000 will usher in the end of the world and who are willing to perpetrate acts of violence to bring that end about.**

## **I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The year 2000 is being discussed and debated at all levels of society. Most of the discussions regarding this issue revolve around the topic of technology and our society's overwhelming dependence on the multitude of computers and computer chips which make our world run smoothly. However, the upcoming millennium also holds important implications beyond the issue of computer technology. Many extremist individuals and groups place some significance on the next millennium, and as such it will present challenges to law enforcement at many levels. The significance is based primarily upon either religious beliefs relating to the Apocalypse or political beliefs relating to the New World Order (NWO) conspiracy theory. The challenge is how well law enforcement will prepare and respond.

The following report, entitled "Project Megiddo," is intended to analyze the potential for extremist criminal activity in the United States by individuals or domestic extremist groups who profess an apocalyptic view of the millennium or attach special significance to the year 2000. The purpose behind this assessment is to provide law enforcement agencies with a clear picture of potential extremism motivated by the next millennium. The report does not contain information on domestic terrorist groups whose actions are not influenced by the year 2000.

There are numerous difficulties involved in providing a thorough analysis of domestic security threats catalyzed by the new millennium. Quite simply, the very nature of the current domestic terrorism threat places severe limitations on effective intelligence gathering and evaluation. Ideological and philosophical belief systems which attach importance, and possibly violence, to the millennium have been well-articulated. From a law enforcement perspective, the problem therefore is not a lack of understanding of motivating ideologies: The fundamental problem is that the traditional focal point for counterterrorism analysis -- the terrorist group -- is not always well-defined or relevant in the current environment.

The general trend in domestic extremism is the terrorist's disavowal of traditional, hierarchical, and structured terrorist organizations. Even well-established militias, which tend to organize along military lines with central control, are characterized by factionalism and disunity.

While several "professional" terrorist groups still exist and present a continued threat to domestic security, the overwhelming majority of extremist groups in the United States have adopted a fragmented, leaderless structure where individuals or small groups act with autonomy. Clearly, the worst act of domestic terrorism in United States history was perpetrated by merely two individuals: Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols. In many cases, extremists of this sort are extremely difficult to identify until after an incident has occurred. Thus, analysis of domestic extremism in which the group serves as the focal point of evaluation has obvious limitations.

The Project Megiddo intelligence initiative has identified very few indications of specific threats to domestic security. Given the present nature of domestic extremism, this is to be expected. However, this is a function of the limitations of the group-oriented model of counterterrorism analysis and should not be taken necessarily as reflective of a minor or trivial domestic threat. Without question, this initiative has revealed indicators of potential violent activity on the part of extremists in this country. Militias, adherents of racist belief systems such as Christian Identity and Odinism, and other radical domestic extremists are clearly focusing on the millennium as a time of action. Certain individuals from these various perspectives are acquiring weapons, storing food and clothing, raising funds through fraudulent means, procuring safe houses, preparing compounds, surveying potential targets, and recruiting new converts. These and other indicators are not taking place in a vacuum, nor are they random or arbitrary. In the final analysis, while making specific predictions is extremely difficult, acts of violence in commemoration of the millennium are just as likely to occur as not. In the absence of intelligence that the more established and organized terrorist groups are planning millennial violence as an organizational strategy, violence is most likely to be perpetrated by radical fringe members of established groups. For example, while Aryan Nations leader Richard Butler publicly frowns on proactive violence, adherents of his religion or individual members of his organization may commit acts of violence autonomously.

Potential cult-related violence presents additional challenges to law enforcement. The potential for violence on behalf of members of biblically-driven cults is determined almost exclusively by the whims of the cult leader. Therefore, effective intelligence and analysis of such cults requires an extensive understanding of the cult leader. Cult members generally act to serve and please the cult leader rather than accomplish an ideological objective. Almost universally, cult leaders are viewed as messianic in the eyes of their followers. Also, the cult leader's prophecies, preachings, orders, and objectives are subject to indiscriminate change. Thus, while analysis of publicly stated goals and objectives of cults may provide hints about their behavior and intentions, it is just as likely to be uninformed or, at worst, misleading. Much more valuable is a thorough examination of the cult leader, his position of power over his followers, and an awareness of the responding behavior and activity of the cult. Sudden changes in activity - for example, less time spent on "Bible study" and more time spent on "physical training" - indicate that the cult may be preparing for some type of action.

The millennium holds special significance for many, and as this pivotal point in time approaches, the impetus for the initiation of violence becomes more acute. Several religiously

motivated groups envision a quick, fiery ending in an apocalyptic battle. Others may initiate a sustained campaign of terrorism in the United States to prevent the NWO. Armed with the urgency of the millennium as a motivating factor, new clandestine groups may conceivably form to engage in violence toward the U.S. Government or its citizens.

Most importantly, this analysis clearly shows that perceptions matter. The perceptions of the leaders and followers of extremist organizations will contribute much toward the ultimate course of action they choose. For example, in-depth analysis of Y2K compliancy on the part of various key sectors that rely on computers has determined that, despite a generally positive outlook for overall compliance, there will be problem industries and minor difficulties and inconveniences.<sup>1</sup> If they occur, these inconveniences are likely to cause varying responses by the extreme fringes. Members of various militia groups, for example, have identified potentially massive power failures as an indication of a United Nations-directed NWO takeover. While experts have indicated that only minor brownouts will occur, various militias are likely to *perceive* such minor brownouts as indicative of a larger conspiracy.<sup>2</sup>

The Senate Special Committee on the Year 2000 Technology Problem has stated that some state and local governments could be unprepared, including the inability to provide benefits payments.<sup>3</sup> This could have a significant impact in major urban areas, resulting in the possibility for civil unrest. Violent white supremacists are likely to view such unrest as an affirmation of a racist, hate-filled world view. Likewise, militia members who predict the implementation of martial law in response to a Y2K computer failure would become all the more fearful.

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Congress, Senate, Special Committee on the Year 2000 Technology Problem Investigating the Impact of the Year 2000 Problem, February 24, 1996, pp. 1-6.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p. 5.

## II. INTRODUCTION

Are we already living on the precipice of the Apocalypse - the chaotic final period of warfare between the forces of good and evil signaling the second coming of Christ, as forecast in the New Testament's Book of Revelation? Or, will life on earth continue for another 1,000 years, allowing humans to eliminate disease and solve the mysteries of the aging process so they can live as long as Methuselah, colonize space, commune with extraterrestrials, unravel the secrets of teleportation, and usher in a golden age of peace and productivity?<sup>4</sup>

At first glance, some of the predictions compiled in Prophecies for the New Millennium that claim to foretell how the millennium will affect the United States seem benign. In fact, those predictions capture some of the countless ways that domestic terrorists view how the millennium will affect the world. The threat posed by extremists as a result of perceived events associated with the Year 2000 (Y2K) is very real.

Numerous religious extremists claim that a race war will soon begin, and have taken steps to become martyrs in their predicted battle between good and evil. Three recent incidents committed by suspects who adhere to ideologies that emphasize millennial related violence illustrate those beliefs: Buford O. Furrow, Jr., the man charged in the August 1999 shootings at a Los Angeles area Jewish day care center, told authorities "its time for America to wake and kill the jews"; Ben Smith, who committed suicide after shooting at minorities in Indiana and Illinois, killing two and injuring ten, over the July 4, 1999 weekend, was found to have literature in his home that indicated the year 2000 would be the start of the killing of minorities; and John William King, the man convicted in the dragging death of James Byrd, Jr., a black man in Jasper, Texas, believed that his actions would help to initiate a race war. Each of these men believed in the imminence of a racial holy war.

Meanwhile, for members of the militia movement the new millennium has a political overtone rather than a religious one. It is their belief that the United Nations has created a secret plan, known as the New World Order (NWO), to conquer the world beginning in 2000. The NWO will be set in motion by the Y2K computer crisis.

Religious motivation and the NWO conspiracy theory are the two driving forces behind the potential for millennial violence. As the end of the millennium draws near, biblical prophecy and political philosophy may merge into acts of violence by the more extreme members of domestic terrorist groups that are motivated, in part, by religion. The volatile mix of apocalyptic religions and NWO conspiracy theories may produce violent acts aimed at precipitating the end of the world as prophesied in the Bible.

When and how Christ's second coming will occur is a critical point in the ideology of those motivated by extremist religious beliefs about the millennium. There is no consensus within

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<sup>4</sup>Cliff Linedecker, Prophecies for the New Millennium(Lantana, FL: Micromags, 1999), p. 3-4

Christianity regarding the specific date that the Apocalypse will occur. However, within many right-wing religious groups there is a uniform belief that the Apocalypse is approaching. Some of these same groups also point to a variety of non-religious indicators such as gun control, the Y2K computer problem, the NWO, the banking system, and a host of other "signs" that the Apocalypse is near. Almost uniformly, the belief among right-wing religious extremists is that the federal government is an arm of Satan. Therefore, the millennium will bring about a battle between Christian martyrs and the government. At the core of this volatile mix is the belief of apocalyptic religions and cults that the battle against Satan, as prophesied in the Book of Revelation, will begin in 2000.

An example of the confrontational nature and belief system of religiously motivated suspects illustrates the unique challenges that law enforcement faces when dealing with a fatalist/martyr philosophy. It also illustrates the domino effect that may occur after such a confrontation. Gordon Kahl, an adherent to the anti-government/racist Christian Identity religion, escaped after a 1983 shootout with police that left two Deputy U.S. Marshals dead. He was later killed during a subsequent shootout with the FBI and others that also left a county sheriff dead. In response to the killing of Kahl, Bob Mathews, a believer in the racist Odinist ideology, founded The Order. After The Order committed numerous crimes, its members were eventually tracked down. Mathews escaped after engaging in a gun battle and later wrote, "Why are so many men so eager to destroy their own kind for the benefit of the Jews and the mongrels? I see three FBI agents hiding behind some trees . . . I could have easily killed them . . . They look like good racial stock yet all their talents are given to a government which is openly trying to mongrelize the very race these agents are part of . . . I have been a good soldier, a fearless warrior. I will die with honor and join my brothers in [heaven]." Exemplifying his beliefs as a martyr, Mathews later burned to death in an armed standoff with the FBI.

In light of the enormous amount of millennial rhetoric, the FBI sought to analyze a number of variables that have the potential to spark violent acts perpetrated by domestic terrorists. Religious beliefs, the Y2K computer problem, and gun control laws all have the potential to become catalysts for such terrorism. The following elements are essential to understanding the phenomenon of domestic terrorism related to the millennium:

### **When Does the New Millennium Begin?**

As the nation and the world prepare to celebrate the arrival of the new millennium, a debate has arisen as to the correct date for its beginning. Although the true starting point of the next millennium is January 1, 2001, as established by the U.S. Naval Observatory in Washington, D.C., our nation's official time keeper, many will celebrate January 1, 2000, as the start of the millennium. The majority of domestic terrorists, like the general public, place a greater significance on January 1, 2000.

### **Blueprint for Action: The Turner Diaries**

Many right-wing extremists are inspired by The Turner Diaries, a book written by William Pierce (under the pseudonym Andrew Macdonald), the leader of the white supremacist group National Alliance. The book details a violent overthrow of the federal government by white supremacists and also describes a brutal race war that is to take place simultaneously. To date, several groups or individuals have been inspired by this book:

- At the time of his arrest, Timothy McVeigh, the man responsible for the Oklahoma City bombing, had a copy of The Turner Diaries in his possession. McVeigh's action against the Murrah Federal Building was strikingly similar to an event described in the book where the fictional terrorist group blows up FBI Headquarters.
- The Order, an early 1980s terrorist cell involved in murder, robberies, and counterfeiting, was motivated by the book's scenarios for a race war. The group murdered Alan Berg, a Jewish talk show host, and engaged in other acts of violence in order to hasten the race war described in the book. The Order's efforts later inspired another group, The New Order, which planned to commit similar crimes in an effort to start a race war that would lead to a violent revolution.<sup>5</sup>
- Most recently, The Turner Diaries provided inspiration to John William King, the man convicted for dragging a black man to his death in Jasper, Texas. As King shackled James Byrd's legs to the back of his truck he was reported to say, "We're going to start the Turner Diaries early."<sup>6</sup>

During the year 2000 and beyond, The Turner Diaries will be an inspiration for right-wing terrorist groups to act because it outlines both a revolutionary takeover of the government and a race war. These elements of the book appeal to a majority of right-wing extremists because it is their belief that one or both events will coincide with Y2K.

### **Interpretations of the Bible**

Religiously based domestic terrorists use the New Testament's Book of Revelation -- the prophecy of the endtime -- for the foundation of their belief in the Apocalypse. Religious extremists interpret the symbolism portrayed in the Book of Revelation and mold it to predict that the endtime is now and that the Apocalypse is near. To understand many religious extremists, it is crucial to know the origin of the Book of Revelation and the meanings of its words, numbers and characters.

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<sup>5</sup>Charles Bosworth Jr., "Illinois Man Sought Start of Race War," St. Louis Post-Dispatch, March 15, 1998.

<sup>6</sup>Paul Duggan, "From Beloved Son to Murder Suspect," The Washington Post, February 16, 1999.

The Book of Revelation was written by a man named "John" who was exiled by the Roman government to a penal colony - the island of Patmos - because of his beliefs in Christ.<sup>7</sup> While on the island, he experienced a series of visions, described in the Book of Revelation. The writing in the Book of Revelation is addressed to churches who were at the time experiencing or were threatened by persecution from Rome because they were not following the government. For this reason, some believe the Book of Revelation was written in code language, much of which was taken from other parts of the Bible.

One interpretation describing the essence of the message contained in Revelation is that God will overcome Christianity's enemies (Roman Government/Satan) and that the persecuted communities should persevere.<sup>8</sup> For right-wing groups who believe they are being persecuted by the satanic government of the United States, the Book of Revelation's message fits perfectly into their world view. This world view, in combination with a literal interpretation of the Book of Revelation, is reflected in extremist ideology, violent acts, and literature. For this reason, it is imperative to know the meaning of some of the "code words" frequently used:

- Four (4) signifies the world.
- Six (6) signifies imperfection.
- Seven (7) is the totality of perfection or fullness and completeness.
- Twelve (12) represents the twelve tribes of Israel or the 12 apostles.
- One-thousand (1000) signifies immensity.
- The color white symbolizes power and can also represent victory, joy and resurrection.
- The color red symbolizes a bloody war.
- The color black symbolizes famine.
- A rider on a pale green horse is a symbol of Death itself.
- "Babylon" is the satanic Roman Government, now used to describe the U.S. government.<sup>9</sup>

Black Hebrew Israelites, a black supremacist group, typify the use of numerology from the Book of Revelation. They believe group members will comprise the 144,000 people who are saved by God in the second coming that is outlined in Revelation (7:1-17). In the Book of Revelation, John is shown a vision of 144,000 martyrs who have survived and did not submit to Satan. This number is derived from the assertion that the twelve tribes of Israel consisted of 12,000 people each.

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<sup>7</sup> While he never claimed to be the book's author, the Apostle John was identified as such by several of the early church Fathers. Authorship is generally ascribed to him today.

<sup>8</sup> This interpretation of the Book of Revelation is according to the Catholic Bible and a Catholic scholar that was consulted on the matter. However, there are other varying interpretations of the Book of Revelation within Christianity.

<sup>9</sup> All symbolism was taken from The Catholic Bible; New American Bible

