



Written by [William F. Jasper](#) on April 27, 2009

Homeland Security: Everyone's a Threat

The DHS document that stirred up the political firestorm is a leaked ten-page report entitled "Rightwing Extremism: Current Economic and Political Climate Fueling Resurgence in Radicalization and Recruitment." The most harshly criticized section of the report concerns the finger of suspicion it points at military veterans. The report, which was distributed to law-enforcement agencies nationwide, warns:



The possible passage of new restrictions on firearms and the return of military veterans facing significant challenges reintegrating into their communities could lead to the potential emergence of terrorist groups or lone wolf extremists capable of carrying out violent attacks.

"Returning veterans," the report continues, "possess combat skills and experience that are attractive to rightwing extremists." It warns that the DHS Office of Intelligence and Analysis "is concerned that rightwing extremists will attempt to recruit and radicalize returning veterans in order to boost their violent capabilities."

What is the basis for this DHS concern? The "Rightwing Extremism" report states: "After Operation Desert Shield/Storm in 1990-1991, some returning military veterans — including Timothy McVeigh — joined or associated with rightwing extremist groups."

David K. Rehbein, national commander of the 2.6 million-member American Legion, was understandably concerned by the DHS slur against America's military veterans, casting them in the negative stereotype favored by leftists in the media and Hollywood. In a letter to Secretary Napolitano, Commander Rehbein wrote:

The American Legion is well aware and horrified at the pain inflicted during the Oklahoma City bombing, but Timothy McVeigh was only one of more than 42 million veterans who have worn this nation's uniform during wartime. To continue to use McVeigh as an example of the stereotypical "disgruntled military veteran" is as unfair as using Osama bin Laden as the sole example of Islam.

Rep. Bennie Thompson of Mississippi, the Democratic chairman of the House Homeland Security Committee, voiced similar concerns. In an April 14 letter to Secretary Janet Napolitano, he wrote he was "dumbfounded" by the contents of the report. "I am disappointed and surprised that the department would allow this report to be disseminated" to law-enforcement agencies, he said. "This report appears to raise significant issues involving the privacy and civil liberties of many Americans — including war veterans," Chairman Thompson cautioned. "As I am certain you agree, freedom of association and freedom of speech are guaranteed to all Americans — whether a person's beliefs,



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whatever their political orientation, are ‘extremist’ or not.”

On April 16, Secretary Napolitano made the rounds of the morning TV shows, in an attempt to quell the growing outrage. “To the extent veterans read it as an accusation ... an apology is owed,” she conceded during an on-air interview on FOX News. “This was an assessment, not an accusation,” Napolitano continued. “It was limited to extremists — those who seek to commit violence within the United States. And all this was meant to do was to give law enforcement what we call ‘situational awareness.’”

Situational awareness? Awareness about what situation, precisely? This “intelligence” report admits that it contains no concrete evidence. It states:

The DHS/Office of Intelligence and Analysis (I&A) has no specific information that domestic rightwing terrorists are currently planning acts of violence, but rightwing extremists may be gaining new recruits by playing on their fears about several emergent issues. The economic downturn and the election of the first African American president present unique drivers for rightwing radicalization and recruitment.

Nevertheless, the DHS report claims that “lone wolves and small terrorist cells embracing violent rightwing extremist ideology are the most dangerous domestic terrorism threat in the United States.”

The report employs the word “rightwing” 50 times, and in nearly every instance (47 times), it is in the context of “rightwing extremism,” “rightwing extremist,” “rightwing terrorist,” or “rightwing terrorist and extremist.” Tellingly, the report doesn’t bother to define any of these politically charged terms, a major dereliction of due diligence in such an important matter. It is similarly shoddy in using terms favored by left-wing extremists to describe their opponents on the right, such as “antigovernment,” “hate-oriented,” “paranoid,” “dangerous,” and “violent.”

The closest the DHS report comes to offering a definition is this troubling description:

Rightwing extremism in the United States can be broadly divided into those groups, movements, and adherents that are primarily hate-oriented (based on hatred of particular religious, racial or ethnic groups), and those that are mainly antigovernment, rejecting federal authority in favor of state or local authority, or rejecting government authority entirely. It may include groups and individuals that are dedicated to a single issue, such as opposition to abortion or immigration.

The DHS report sloppily (or, perhaps, cleverly and maliciously) demonizes millions of law-abiding Americans, conflating them with violent, criminal groups such as Neo-Nazis and “white supremacists” simply because they adhere to political beliefs at variance with those of the administration. By repeatedly associating “rightwing,” “extremism,” “terrorism,” “violence,” “threat,” “dangerous,” and “white supremacist” with those who oppose abortion, gun control, socialism, government bailouts, and amnesty for illegal aliens, the DHS is reinforcing a left-wing trope aimed at criminalizing and silencing politically incorrect expression and dissent.

The DHS report is doubly troubling because it comes quick on the heels of a similar federal-state law-enforcement bulletin out of Missouri targeting conservatives, libertarians, gun rights advocates, pro-life activists, and others. Much of the criticism of Napolitano and the DHS report has failed to draw the disturbing connection between the DHS “Rightwing Extremism” report and “The Modern Militia Movement,” a report issued in February by the Missouri Information and Analysis Center (MIAC), a branch of the state’s Highway Patrol. MIAC is what is known as a “fusion center,” one of 58 such federal-state-local law-enforcement centers nationwide sponsored by DHS.



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The MIAC report turned into an especially hot potato when it became known that it specifically named political candidates and political parties, implying that they and their supporters should be viewed as potential terrorists, and/or threats to law enforcement. The MIAC report states:

You are the Enemy: The militia subscribes to an antigovernment and NWO [New World Order] mind set, which creates a threat to law enforcement officers. They view the military, National Guard, and law enforcement as a force that will confiscate their firearms and place them in FEMA concentration camps. [Bold emphasis in original.]

The MIAC report then states: "Militia members most commonly associate with 3rd party political groups. It is not uncommon for militia members to display Constitutional Party, Campaign for Liberty, or Libertarian material. These members are usually supporters of former Presidential Candidate [sic]: Ron Paul, Chuck Baldwin, and Bob Barr."

Like Secretary Napolitano, Missouri Governor Jay Nixon initially defended his agency's report. However, as a public backlash against the report built during the last weeks of March, he reversed course. Van Godsey, the director of the fusion center that produced the report, was replaced on April 6. His superior, Department of Public Safety Director John Britt, was placed on administrative leave pending an investigation of the report.

Missouri State Rep. Jim Guest told *The New American* he is especially concerned that the MIAC illustrates the growing problem of increased intrusion by the federal government into state police functions. He hopes to uncover the sources of the politicized "intelligence" in the MIAC report and the exact nature of Missouri's relationship to DHS at the MIAC fusion center.

Investigate DHS

Members of Congress should be looking into this matter as well. The dangerous precedents established by the DHS and MIAC reports should not be allowed to pass simply because Secretary Napolitano was forced by public pressure to issue a halfhearted apology. She would not even have done that had the DHS report remained secret. Listed as "UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY (U//FOUO)," the DHS report tells law-enforcement recipients it "is not to be released to the public, the media, or other personnel." Likewise, the MIAC report prohibits distribution to those outside law enforcement.

With nearly 60 of these DHS federal-state fusion centers nationwide, there is good reason to suspect that other similar reports attacking Americans' constitutionally guaranteed rights have been issued or are being developed for dissemination.

This kind of political targeting is very dangerous and underscores why the U.S. Constitution strictly circumscribes federal policing and reserves the vast majority of police powers to the states. The Founding Fathers wisely recognized that gradual encroachment by the federal government could lead to nationalization and the eventual use of a national police force to impose tyranny. While it may be true that corruption and abuse of police powers at the state and local levels will always be a concern as well, the magnitude of the danger pales in comparison to the menace posed by a centralized agency with police authority over the entire nation. The DHS-sponsored fusion centers are further evidence that the DHS is the lead agency of what is rapidly becoming a de facto national police force.

There is an additional facet of the DHS and MIAC reports that begs to be exposed: the strange and alarming symbiosis between the federal government (especially the Departments of Justice and Homeland Security) and certain private left-wing groups. We might ask, for instance, how the DHS arrived at its conclusion that "the most dangerous domestic terrorism threat in the United States"



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comes from individuals and cells “embracing violent rightwing extremist ideology.”

According to the DHS report, this assessment is based on information “from law enforcement and nongovernmental organizations.” Who are these unnamed NGOs? That is not too difficult to figure out. As we have noted previously in these pages and in our online articles, the wording in the government reports is very similar to what we find in diatribes against conservatives issued by hard-core left-wing groups such as the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), and the Political Research Associates (PRA).

However, the connection goes beyond the mere filtration of biased verbiage by these above-mentioned groups into official bulletins; they and other organizations have been working closely with the Department of Justice (DOJ) since the Clinton administration officially targeted “rightwing” opponents. The SPLC and ADL websites boast about their workshops in which they train hundreds of federal and state law-enforcement personnel in the dangers emanating from “rightwing” threats.

The most important of the nongovernmental groups impacting the DHS and DOJ in this regard is the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), which is usually described by the elite media as “nonpartisan” and “balanced.” It is probably accurate to view the CFR’s April 21, 2008 *Backgrounder* report, entitled “Militant Extremists in the United States,” as the document that kicked off the current round of official government warnings of a new “rightwing” menace.

According to the study, written by CFR staffer Holly Fletcher, the main domestic security danger to the United States comes from “hate groups motivated by ultra-conservative ideals that are often anti-Semitic and racially motivated.” Fletcher shows a telling dependence on the SPLC, citing them as an authority several times. She writes, for example, that “right-wing extremists are still considered the most dangerous to the United States, says the SPLC.” And, she writes, “Left-wing and environmental extremist groups are not hate groups, according to the SPLC, because they do not espouse rhetoric that targets specific groups that have a defining characteristic.”

Surprise, surprise, the CFR/SPLC line is precisely the attitude adopted by the DHS! When the furor erupted over the DHS “Rightwing Extremism” report, the DHS and its media shills pointed to a DHS report issued in January entitled “Leftwing Extremism.” This supposedly showed that the department is being impartial and even-handed. However, the DHS “Leftwing Extremism” report is far from impartial. It follows the CFR/SPLC lead, falsely claiming that left-wing extremists are comparatively benign because they adhere to a “nonviolent, ‘no-harm’ doctrine” that leads them to simply target property for vandalism, rather than attacking people. The DHS report does not specifically mention the SPLC, but it is most likely referring to them when it quotes a “prominent civil rights organization” on the danger of military veterans being recruited by “violent neo-nazis, skinheads, and white supremacists.” The DHS-sponsored MIAC report specifically references SPLC as one of its sources.

Congressional and state investigations should probe this alarming evidence indicating that hard-core left-wing activist groups have become grafted onto government agencies and are abusing federal and state police powers to target their political opponents.

Mounting Legal Opposition

Private legal efforts to redress the DHS abuses are already underway. The Thomas More Law Center, a national public interest law firm based in Ann Arbor, Michigan, announced on April 17 that it had filed a federal lawsuit against DHS Secretary Napolitano. The suit charges that her department’s “Rightwing Extremism Policy,” as reflected in the DHS Intelligence Assessment “Rightwing Extremism,” violates



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the civil liberties of combat veterans as well as American citizens by targeting them for disfavored treatment on account of their political beliefs.

Richard Thompson, president and chief counsel of the law center, stated, “Janet Napolitano is lying to the American people when she says the Report is not based on ideology or political beliefs. In fact, her report would have the admiration of the Gestapo and any current or past dictator in the way it targets political opponents. This incompetently written intelligence assessment, which directs law enforcement officials across the country to target and report on American citizens who have the political beliefs mentioned in the report, will be used as a tool to stifle political opposition and opinions. It will give a pretext for opponents of those Americans to report them to police as rightwing extremists and terrorists. You can imagine what happens then.”

The lawsuit was filed in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan on behalf of nationally syndicated conservative radio talk-show host Michael Savage, Gregg Cunningham (president of the pro-life organization Center for Bio-Ethical Reform, Inc.), and Iraq War Marine veteran Kevin Murray. The law center claims that Napolitano’s DHS has violated the First and Fifth Amendment constitutional rights of these three plaintiffs by attempting to chill their free speech, expressive association, and equal protection rights. The lawsuit further claims that the Department of Homeland Security encourages law-enforcement officers throughout the nation to target and report citizens to federal officials as suspicious right-wing extremists and potential terrorists because of their political beliefs.

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