



The New Push to Criminalize Dissent

Last Friday, the *New York Times*' Paul Krugman [launched](#) a full endorsement of government attacks on the political right: "With the murder of Dr. George Tiller by an anti-abortion fanatic, closely followed by a shooting by a white supremacist at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, the analysis looks prescient.... Politicians and media organizations wind up such people at their, and our, peril." Just in case that was too subtle, Krugman titled his piece "[The Big Hate](#)."



The DHS report said veterans were a potential terrorist threat, and now leftists argue it was "prescient." After all, alleged Holocaust Museum shooter James Von Brunn [appears to have been a veteran of World War II](#), having served as a PT Boat captain. The recent [murder of abortionist George Tiller](#) on May 31 was at the hands of a person the media identified as a "right-wing extremist." The report was vindicated, right? No, the report cited recent veterans, not World War II veterans, as the primary terrorist threat from veterans. And the nation has hardly undergone an epidemic of anti-abortion-related violence. [Three deaths](#) and less than a dozen acts of violence in the past decade against abortionists across a nation of more than 300 million people, the [majority of whom call themselves pro-life](#). The pro-life movement [universally condemned the murder](#) and prides itself on respect for all life, especially those babies in the womb that fit any [scientific definition of human life](#).

Other left-wing pundits are saying the same thing as Krugman. "The overall report was very prescient," Brian Levin, director of the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism at California State University in San Bernardino, [told the *Christian Science Monitor*](#). And the leftist People for the American Way has [called for a newer, updated version](#) of the DHS "Right-Wing Extremism" report.

Krugman's column was followed two days later by an op-ed by *New York Times* columnist (and



Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on June 15, 2009

predictable conservative-hater) Frank Rich, who [wrote](#) that animated criticism of the Obama administration, such as [actor Jon Voight saying](#) he wants to “bring an end to this false prophet Obama,” constitutes language that incites people to terrorist violence. “This kind of rhetoric, with its pseudo-Scriptural call to action, is toxic. It is getting louder each day of the Obama presidency. No one, not even Fox News viewers, can say they weren’t warned.”

The key phrases in Krugman and Rich’s pieces are that “Politicians and media organizations wind up such people at their, and our, peril” and “No one, not even Fox News viewers, can say they weren’t warned,” respectively.

The real objection behind such reports is not that they are singling out particular groups, though they clearly do this. The DHS also came out with [a report on “Leftwing Extremists.”](#) That’s balance, right? Wrong. Both reports are an affront to freedom. They constitute, like Krugman and Rich’s remarks, an attempt to intimidate anyone who has any disagreement with current federal policies by tarring them as potential terrorists. It isn’t “balance” if you paint anyone who criticizes government policies as being a potential terrorist. The “left” or “right” distinctions become meaningless in such a context.

Department of Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano [lied in an April 15 statement](#), saying, “We are on the lookout for criminal and terrorist activity but we do not — nor will we ever — monitor ideology or political beliefs.” But that’s precisely what the reports do. The “right-wing” report in particular focuses upon “lone wolf” offenders, i.e., people with no ties to organized political movements. A right-wing “lone wolf” terrorist is just another way of saying “insane criminal.” But it’s not just the DHS that is concerning itself with right-wing “lone wolves.”

“Lone-wolf offenders continue to be of great concern to law enforcement,” the *Wall Street Journal* [reported June 15](#). The FBI has contracted with Harvard University to study psychological profiles of “lone wolf” extremists, according to the *Journal*. The contract is part of an ongoing FBI program to watch political groups as potential terrorists under its [“Operation Vigilant Eagle” program](#). “The FBI is” the *Journal* reported, quoting an FBI memo, “trying to identify a potential lone wolf before he or she would act out violently.”

Deputy Assistant Director of the FBI’s Counterterrorism Division, [Michael Ward, said](#) in an interview last fall that preventative crime is their goal: “Anyone who would be inclined to act out, we’d have a sporting chance to take any kind of preventative measures we can.”

Conservatives and everyone else who criticize government policies have been informed that they are being watched, and in the words of Frank Rich, they have been “warned.” The question is, will citizens allow themselves to be intimidated, or will they insist through their elected representatives that the intimidation from Washington stop?

Photo of Paul Krugman: Prolineserver



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