

NCTC
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ARTICLE

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(U [REDACTED]) DVEs and Foreign Analogues May React Violently to COVID-19 Mitigation Mandates

(U/[REDACTED]) NCTC, DHS, and FBI assess that some domestic violent extremists (DVEs) and their foreign analogues will threaten or mobilize to violence in opposition to new or expanding COVID-19–related mandates. In 2020, DVEs threatened or plotted violence against the healthcare sector and state and local government officials. Since the advent of COVID-19 vaccines, DVEs have expanded their potential target set to include federal government officials, healthcare workers, or others who enforce vaccination mandates or participate in vaccination efforts. We anticipate that the threat will continue at least into the winter, as many of the new COVID-19 mandates in the United States and some other Western countries are implemented, including US workplace vaccination policies that carry disciplinary or termination penalties.

(U/[REDACTED]) Some DVEs and their foreign analogues might exploit planned demonstrations to overrun or attack state and federal buildings or incite violence at mandate protests. In August 2020, German racially or ethnically motivated violent extremists (RMVEs) stormed the Reichstag parliament building, protesting COVID-19 mitigation mandates. In Greece, Greek RMVE groups and antivaccination demonstrators have called for armed action against mandates, judging from Greek open-source reporting and public claims by RMVE groups.

- (U/[REDACTED]) In the United States, we have observed at least a handful of identified antigovernment or antiauthority violent extremists (AGAAVEs)—specifically militia violent extremists (MVEs)—characterize COVID-19 vaccination and mask mandates as evidence of government overreach.^a Since August 2021, some of these MVEs have called for violence against medical or

^a(U/[REDACTED]) Some DVEs employ a number of techniques, some of which may be criminal, whereas others may constitute the exercise of rights protected by the US Constitution. US persons linking, citing, quoting, or voicing the same narratives raised by these DVEs are likely engaging in First Amendment-protected activities, unless they are acting in concert with a threat actor. Furthermore, variants of the topics covered in this product—even those that include divisive terms—should not be assumed to reflect DVE activity, absent information specifically attributing the content to DVE threat actors. The mere advocacy of political or social positions, political activism, use of strong rhetoric, or generalized philosophic embrace of violent tactics may not constitute violent extremism and are constitutionally protected.

(U) This report is provided by the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC). [REDACTED]

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pharmaceutical employees, mobile vaccine clinics, elected or public health officials, federal agencies, and law enforcement officers, according to FBI information.

- () Some RMVEs—driven by a belief in the superiority of the white race—have claimed that there is a conspiracy among Jews or other minorities to “mass murder” white people through vaccinations, according to FBI information. Since July, RMVEs in the United States, Australia, France, Greece, and Italy have plotted or threatened violence against government officials, law enforcement officers, and healthcare workers, according to , US military reporting, FBI information, and open-source reporting.

- (U//) A range of narratives about COVID-19 have resonated with MVEs, RMVEs, and DVEs motivated by QAnon, compounding the view that COVID-19 mandates justify violent responses. Prominent narratives include the belief that COVID-19 vaccines are unsafe, especially for children, are part of a government or global conspiracy to deprive individuals of their civil liberties and livelihoods, or are designed to start a new social or political order.

(U//) We assess that the controversy surrounding vaccination mandates for school-age children, employees facing termination for lack of compliance, or perceptions of unfair healthcare treatment for the unvaccinated might trigger increased violence by DVEs, their foreign analogues, or other violent actors. Given these conditions, DVEs would most likely plot violent acts to intimidate healthcare workers and officials charged with implementing COVID-19 mitigation measures as well as, possibly, killings or kidnappings of state, local, or federal government personnel—similar to plotting that has occurred recently in the United States, France, and Italy—judging from State Department, FBI, and open-source information.

- (U//) The availability of a vaccine for all school-age children might spur conspiracy theories and perceptions that schools will vaccinate children against parents’ will and may increase the potential for violence. In September, a person suggested in an online post that medical workers administering the COVID-19 vaccine to schoolchildren were a legitimate target to attack and questioned the difficulty in obtaining the medical workers’ identifying information, according to DHS information.
- (U//) DVEs might mobilize to violence in opposition to the vaccination mandates if there are widespread reports of individuals—who refuse to be vaccinated—losing their jobs, especially when occurring around yearend holidays. In addition, another spike in COVID-19 cases may lead to overcrowding in hospitals and spur DVE accusations that healthcare providers are not providing equitable care to unvaccinated people.

(U//[REDACTED]) The FBI, DHS, and NCTC define a **domestic violent extremist** as an individual based and operating primarily within the United States or its territories, without direction or inspiration from a foreign terrorist group or other foreign power, who seeks to further political or social goals wholly or in part through unlawful acts of force or violence.

(U//[REDACTED]) **Antigovernment or antiauthority violent extremism** encompasses the potentially unlawful use of force or violence in furtherance of political and/or social agendas, which are deemed to derive from antigovernment or antiauthority sentiment, including opposition to perceived economic, social, or racial hierarchies or perceived government overreach, negligence, or illegitimacy.

(U//[REDACTED]) **Militia violent extremism** falls within the overarching domestic terrorism threat category of antigovernment or antiauthority violent extremism. The FBI, DHS, and NCTC define militia violent extremists (MVEs) as individuals who seek, wholly or in part through unlawful acts of force or violence, to further their belief that the US Government is purposely exceeding its Constitutional authority and is attempting to establish a totalitarian regime. Consequently, these individuals oppose many federal and state laws and regulations, particularly those related to firearms ownership. MVEs take overt steps to violently resist or facilitate the overthrow of the US Government. An individual does not need to be a member of or claim membership in a militia organization in order to be considered an MVE. Some MVEs mobilize to violence as lone offenders or commit criminal activity alone but are still considered MVEs due to adherence to the militia ideology.

(U//[REDACTED]) **Racially or ethnically motivated violent extremism** encompasses the potentially unlawful use or threat of force or violence in furtherance of political and/or social agendas, which are deemed to derive from bias, often related to race or ethnicity, held by the actor against others, including a given population group.

SPECIAL ANALYSIS

JOINT ANALYTIC CELL

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**(U//████) Diverse Sociopolitical Factors Amplifying Persistent Domestic Violent Extremist Threat**

(U//████) An overlapping set of sociopolitical grievances spurred domestic violent extremists (DVE) to plot attacks during 2021, fomenting a sustained threat of violence to the public and to democratic institutions, and events in 2022 will probably further exacerbate DVE activity. Adherents of several DVE ideologies continued to converge around anger at government responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, immigration, and perceived election fraud—along with evolving conspiracy theories—thus increasing the likelihood that violent extremist messaging or an attack would encourage other DVEs to take action.^a

- (U//████) DVEs carried out at least four fatal attacks in 2021—the same number as in 2020—killing 13 people, according to preliminary analysis of FBI investigative information. The number of pending FBI domestic terrorism investigations more than doubled in 2021—from about 1,400 to about 2,900—in part because of cases related to the siege of the US Capitol on 6 January 2021.
- (U//████) DVEs adhering to different ideologies but motivated by perceptions of fraud in the 2020 general election were arrested in 2021 for plotting or threatening violence against federal, state, and local government officials and political party representatives, highlighting the elevated threat posed to elected officials countrywide. On 28 April 2021, a New York-based militia violent extremist (MVE) was convicted on federal charges for threatening to assault and murder members of the US Congress.
- (U//████) Since the US Capitol siege, a diverse set of DVEs have shared in person and online their perceptions of government overreach on pandemic mitigation efforts, and they have encouraged one another to act. In August and September 2021, MVEs called for violence against medical or pharmaceutical employees, mobile vaccine clinics, elected or public health officials, school board or faculty members, federal agencies, and law enforcement in response to alleged overreach in instituting, enforcing, or otherwise supporting health measures to mitigate COVID-19's spread, according to FBI information.

(U//████) Key disruptions in 2021 underscored the elevated DVE threat and demonstrated the diverse nature of the threat from DVEs of varying ideologies. However, many DVEs have elevated their operational security practices after high-profile plot disruptions and public reports of communication interception in 2020 and early 2021, hindering our ability to warn of specific attacks. DVEs typically mobilize to violence in response to an individualized mix of ideological and personal drivers, and the catalysts for lone-actor violence are often unpredictable.

- (U//████) In January 2021, the FBI disrupted a plot by two suspected California-based MVEs who were planning to bomb Democratic Party ^{USPER} headquarters in Sacramento. Federal investigators discovered multiple pipe bombs and dozens of firearms. The suspects were taken into custody before the planned attack date.
- (U//████) In April, the FBI arrested a Texas-based MVE who intended to bomb a US-based business, believing that the business's data center provided services to federal agencies—including the FBI and CIA. The individual was sentenced to 10 years in federal prison in October.
- (U//████) In July, the FBI arrested an Ohio-based involuntary celibate violent extremist for violation of federal firearm and hate crime laws based on his alleged actions in planning an attack on a university sorority. The individual had allegedly written a manifesto describing his hatred for women and his desire to “slaughter” them.

^a(U) The mere advocacy of political or social positions, political activism, use of strong rhetoric, or generalized philosophic embrace of violent tactics does not constitute extremism and may be constitutionally protected.

NOTICE: DHS, FBI, and NCTC developed this analytic product under the auspices of the Joint Analytic Cell on Domestic Violent Extremism, an interagency effort to inform policymakers, law enforcement agencies, and private sector partners' efforts to detect, prevent, and mitigate acts of violence.

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(U//[REDACTED]) **Diverse Sociopolitical Factors Amplifying Persistent Domestic Violent Extremist Threat** *(continued)*

- (U//[REDACTED]) Since late 2020, some DVEs have encouraged the continued vetting of associates and the use of alternative or low-tech communication in response to perceived government attempts to entrap them, according to FBI reporting. A Texas-based MVE posted a warning in January 2021 to a webpage, advising "patriots" to "beware of false flags and traps that are now being set," "be careful who you listen to and what events you attend," and "expect attempts to lure you onto enemy controlled ground."

(U//[REDACTED]) Developments related to the COVID-19 pandemic, midterm election, and immigration will probably motivate DVEs across ideologies to plot or attempt violence in 2022. DVEs may interpret or exploit the public prevalence of violent extremist narratives to justify violent extremist action.

- (U//[REDACTED]) New COVID-19 mitigation measures—particularly mandates or endorsements of vaccines for school-age children—will probably spur plotting against the government, health care, or education sectors. Anger at the mitigation efforts of businesses and federal, state, and local governments motivated several DVE attacks, plots, and calls for violence against health care workers and mobile vaccine clinics in 2020 and 2021.
- (U//[REDACTED]) The 2022 midterm election will probably cause DVEs to target political candidates, party offices, or election events or workers based on their real or perceived political affiliations. Several DVEs, motivated in part by perceptions of fraud in the 2020 general election, were arrested in 2021 for making plans to attack federal, state, and local officials.
- (U//[REDACTED]) Immigration-related developments may spur DVEs to conduct planned or opportunistic violence. Immigration issues at the southwestern border prompted some racially or ethnically motivated violent extremists (RMVE) and MVEs to visit or discuss patrolling the border—which has resulted in criminal activity in the past—and probable anarchist violent extremists have responded to government action by vandalizing and setting fire to a federal building containing Immigration and Customs Enforcement offices in Portland, Oregon.
- (U//[REDACTED]) The introduction or passage of new legislation or landmark US Supreme Court rulings could result in DVE calls to violence toward political opponents, while law enforcement involvement in deaths of DVEs or like-minded individuals could serve as a rallying cry for violence. In 2020, some DVEs exploited lawful gatherings in the wake of law enforcement-involved deaths to conduct violence against ideological opponents and other targets.

SPECIAL ANALYSIS

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(U//) Diverse Sociopolitical Factors Amplifying Persistent Domestic Violent Extremist Threat *(continued)*

(U//) Fatal Domestic Violent Extremist Attacks and FBI Investigations

(U//) The FBI is investigating approximately 2,950 domestic terrorism-related cases, 61 percent of which are related to the 6 January siege of the US Capitol. The size and complexity of US Capitol siege-related investigations have required the Department of Justice, to include the FBI, to surge resources to investigate and prosecute Capitol siege participants, while maintaining an agile security posture to address domestic terrorism threats.

Violent Extremist Terminology





AGAAVE: Anti-government or anti-authority violent extremism

AR-Eco: Animal rights/environmental violent extremism

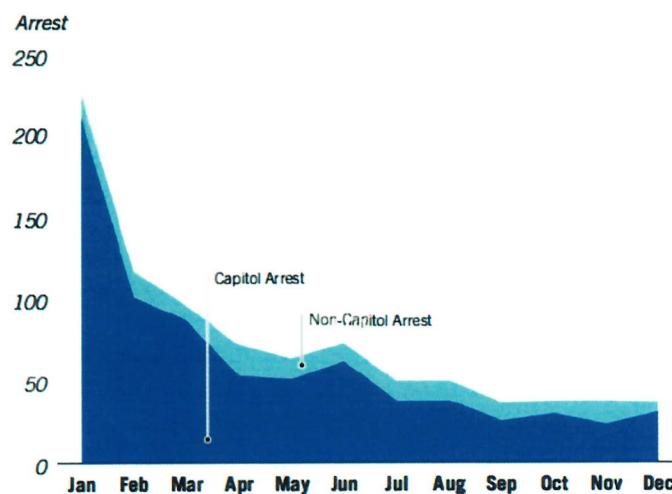
DT: Domestic terrorism

RMVE: Racially and ethnically motivated violent extremism

(U) Fatal Domestic Violent Extremist Attacks in the US, 2021

DATE	CATEGORY	LOCATION	KILLED	TARGET	WEAPON
21 June	DT Other	Arvada, CO	2	Law enforcement	
23 June	RMVE	Daytona Beach, FL	1	Law enforcement	
26 June	RMVE	Winthrop, MA	2	Racial or ethnic minorities	
16 March	DT Other	Atlanta, GA	8	Individuals fitting actor's personalized ideology	

() Domestic Violent Extremist Arrests, 2021

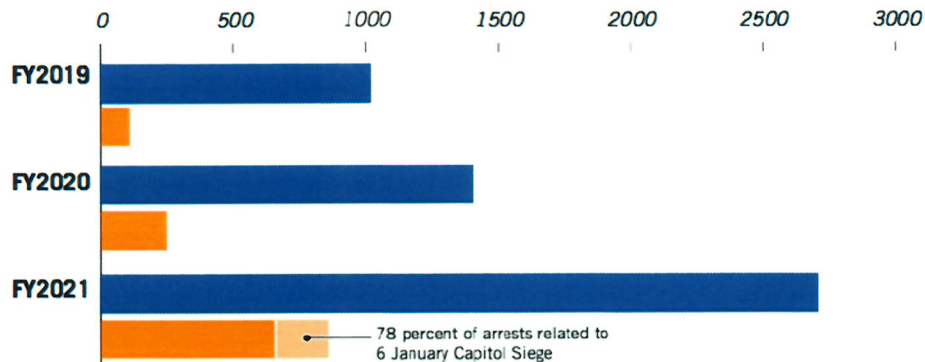


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(U//) Diverse Sociopolitical Factors Amplifying Persistent Domestic Violent Extremist Threat (continued)

() Active Domestic Terrorism–Related Investigations and Arrests, Fiscal Years 2019–2021



(U) Graphic source note

(U//) The FBI and DHS define a domestic violent extremist (DVE) as an individual based and operating primarily within the United States or its territories without direction or inspiration from a foreign terrorist group or other foreign power who seeks to further political or social goals, wholly or in part, through unlawful acts of force or violence. The mere advocacy of political or social positions, political activism, use of strong rhetoric, or generalized philosophic embrace of violent tactics do not constitute extremism and may be constitutionally protected.

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(U//) Racially or ethnically motivated violent extremism encompasses the potentially unlawful use or threat of force or violence, in furtherance of political and/or social agendas, which are deemed to derive from bias, often related to race or ethnicity, held by the actor against others, including a given population group.

(U//) Anarchist violent extremism encompasses individuals who seek, wholly or in part, through unlawful acts of force or violence, to further their opposition to all forms of capitalism, corporate globalization, and governing institutions, which they perceive as harmful to society. The mere advocacy of political or social positions, political activism, use of strong rhetoric, or generalized philosophic embrace of violent tactics do not constitute violent extremism and may be constitutionally protected.

(U//) The FBI and DHS define involuntary celibate violent extremists as individuals who use unlawful force or violence in the furtherance of their ideological belief that society unjustly denies them sexual or romantic attention.