



FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION Domestic Terrorism Reference Guide

Militia Violent Extremism

(U) THREAT OVERVIEW

(U//FOUO) Militia violent extremists (MVEs) are anti-government/anti-authority violent extremists who seek to use or threaten force or violence to further their ideology in response to perceived abuses of power by the government, perceived bureaucratic incompetence, or perceived government overreach, especially in regard to suspected infringements on gun and land rights and excessive use of force by law enforcement. They fear the government is unwilling or unable to protect the United States from perceived threats from undocumented immigrants, drug traffickers, Muslims, and certain social/political activists and believe their actions are justified, given their self-appointed role as protectors of the US Constitution—a responsibility they perceive as consistent with a well-armed citizenry sanctioned by the Second Amendment. They hold a deep belief in conspiracy theories regarding the suspension of civil liberties, the internment of Americans, foreign invasion and occupation, and the end of constitutional government.

(U//FOUO) Some MVEs call themselves III%ers (Three Percenters), based on their belief that only three percent of American colonists took up arms against the British Government during the Revolutionary War. Some III%ers regard the present-day US Government as analogous to the British monarchy during the 18th century in terms of its infringements on civil liberties. The term generally represents the perception that a small force with a just cause can overthrow a tyrannical government if armed and prepared.



(U//FOUO) Some MVEs use the term “Boogaloo,” which references a violent uprising or impending civil war. The term has particularly resonated with MVEs, who have adopted it to reference an impending politically-motivated civil war or uprising against the government following perceived incursions on Constitutional rights—including the Second Amendment—or other perceived government overreach.

(U) TARGETS and TACTICS

(U//FOUO) **Targets:** Traditionally, MVEs have targeted government and law enforcement personnel and facilities, which they regard as threatening the rights of American citizens. MVEs have also targeted entities that they perceive as posing national security and social threats to the United States, such as undocumented immigrants and suspected drug traffickers along the southwest border; Muslims, Islamic centers, and mosques; and suspected looters and individuals whose ideologies they oppose, including perceived anti-fascists. Extremist members of armed militias that patrol the US-Mexico border, purportedly to assist authorities, have threatened violence against and detained migrants, and their operations increase the possibility of violent encounters with law enforcement. Some MVEs have plotted attacks on critical infrastructure in order to provoke a civil war between citizens and the government.

(U//FOUO) **Tactics:** Some MVEs form or become members of groups in order to advance violent plots against their targets or to prepare for emergency contingencies that they believe would require a militia. Some of these groups focus recruitment efforts on current/former law enforcement and military personnel for their weapons skills, training, and potential access to restricted databases. MVEs often subject prospective members to background checks and interviews. MVEs in various geographic locations use the Internet and encrypted applications to plot criminal activity, transmit ideology, solicit donations, recruit members, plan meetings or training events, and display training videos. MVEs conduct paramilitary training, often called field training exercises, which involves the use of firearms and sometimes explosives and often incorporates US military tactics, such as combat techniques, hand signals, security detail operations, and survival skills. MVEs often use legally purchased firearms in their illegal activities. In some cases, they seek to purchase firearms from gun shows and associates rather than traditional dealers in order to avoid documentation of their purchases. Some MVEs acquire illegal guns or firearms and components for which they are not licensed, including automatic weapons and suppressors, or circumvent firearms regulations and background checks by assembling firearms from components, or by modifying otherwise legal guns, such as converting semiautomatic firearms to fully automatic. MVEs sometimes seek to acquire or produce explosives to use in violent plots or stockpile for later use. MVEs generally attempt to manufacture improvised explosive devices using commercially available materials, though some also attempt to obtain military-grade or industrial explosives.

(U) For additional information, please contact the Counterterrorism Analysis Section of the FBI Counterterrorism Division via email at FBI_CTAS@fbi.gov.

(U) Disclaimer: Domestic Violent Extremists (DVEs) employ several indicators, some of which may be criminal and others which may constitute the exercise of rights guaranteed by the US Constitution. Under FBI policy and federal law, no investigative activity may be based solely on First Amendment activity. The FBI does not investigate, collect, or maintain information on US persons solely for the purpose of monitoring activities protected by the First Amendment. All personnel should exercise sound judgment and discretion in evaluating the totality of circumstances surrounding any of these indicators in order to determine whether a law enforcement or intelligence response or activity is warranted.

(U) INDICATORS

(U//FOUO) Indicators of militia violent extremist ideology may comprise constitutionally protected conduct, and no single indicator should be the sole basis for a determination of militia violent extremism or criminal activity. The following indicators of militia violent extremist ideology may constitute a basis for reporting or law enforcement action when observed in combination with suspicious criminal or potentially violent activity:

- ◆ (U//FOUO) MVEs often reference the Second Amendment, allegations of tyranny, and historic grievances, such as federal law enforcement's handling of the raids in Ruby Ridge, Idaho, in 1992 and Waco, Texas, in 1993.
- ◆ (U//FOUO) Some MVEs highlight the deaths of other likeminded individuals involved in encounters with the government and law enforcement, including US persons LaVoy Finicum, Duncan Lemp, and others.
- ◆ (U//FOUO) Rhetoric, imagery, and attire referencing the III% are possible indicators of MVE activity, although not all MVEs ascribe to the concept.
- ◆ (U//FOUO) Some MVEs have used the terminology and imagery associated with the "boogaloo" concept to network in person and online based on shared grievances with the government and law enforcement. Rhetoric, imagery, and attire referencing the "Boogaloo" are possible indicators of MVE activity, although not all MVEs ascribe to the concept. The term is also used to a lesser extent by other actors, including racially or ethnically motivated violent extremists (RMVEs) who advocate superiority of the white race. Some RMVEs have used the term to reference an impending race war or other conflict that will lead to the collapse of the "system," to include the US Government and society, and allude to it using shorthand such as "big igloo" or "big luau" and imagery such as igloos or Hawaiian shirts.
- ◆ (U//FOUO) Some MVEs may form paramilitary style organization and use paramilitary style tactical equipment in accordance with their interpretation of the Second Amendment and the social nature of the movement.

(U) NOTABLE ATTACKS or CRIMINAL ACTS

(U//FOUO) In April and June 2019, FBI and law enforcement partners arrested two MVEs who led militias that detained undocumented migrants along a portion of the US-Mexico border in New Mexico. One MVE pleaded guilty to a felony charge of possession of a firearm, and the other MVE was convicted of false impersonation of a Border Patrol agent.

(U) In August 2017, the FBI arrested an MVE on federal charges of plotting a VBIED attack on a bank in downtown Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. The MVE initially wanted to blow up the Federal Reserve Building in Washington, DC with a device similar to that used in the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing because he was upset with the US Government. The MVE was convicted for attempted use a weapon of mass destruction and sentenced to 25 years imprisonment.

(U) In October 2016, FBI and law enforcement partners arrested three MVEs who were planning to conduct IEDs on an apartment complex in Garden City, Kansas, where Muslim immigrants from Somalia loved and worshipped. The three MVEs were convicted on federal charges and received sentences of 25 to 30 years imprisonment.

(U) KEY TERMS

Term	Description
2nd Amendment (2A)	Refers to the Second Amendment to the Constitution of the United States: "A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed." MVEs and others within the militia movement often reference and interpret the Second Amendment to justify private militia activities and their opposition to gun laws.
Agenda 21	A nonbinding United Nations (UN) agreement that advocated for international environmental responsibility. MVEs sometimes regard Agenda 21 as a globalist conspiracy to seize rural lands prior to a UN takeover and the implementation of the New World Order.
Boogaloo	A term some MVEs use to describe the notion of, and sometimes a desire for, a second American Civil War between citizens and the government. "Big igloo," "Big luau," "Boog Bois," "Boojahideen," and other associated word-play in addition to imagery such as igloos, Hawaiian shirts, and leis, are used as coded references to the larger boogaloo phenomenon on- and offline. Because some people use the term jokingly and RMVEs who advocate the superiority of the white race sometimes use the term to refer to a race war, the context of the use of the term should be considered carefully.
Bug Out	A phrase used by MVEs and non-extremist preppers to reference emergency contingency planning, usually involving weapons, supplies, evacuation procedures, and rendezvous locations.
False Flag	A conspiracy theory alleging the government carries out plots, often violent actions like terrorist attacks or mass shootings, in order to manipulate the public through fear into placing blame for the violent action, on an innocent third party. Some MVEs believe the government uses such covert actions to promote its unconstitutional agenda, including sweeping military and law enforcement action or encroachments on gun rights and other civil liberties.
Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Camps	Some MVEs believe under the guise of humanitarian projects, FEMA intends to gather Americans in concentration camps in conjunction with the suspension of civil liberties and the establishment of the New World Order.
Field Training Exercise (FTX)	A term used to describe tactical training. MVEs often use the phrase to describe drills in which participants train with weapons and practice tactics. These often occur on private property or in government-owned parks and forests.

(U) KEY TERMS continued

Term	Description
Killdozer	A meme used to reference a 4 June 2004 incident in which an individual used a bulldozer he had armored to demolish multiple buildings in the town in Granby, Colorado, in response to his grievances with local government. The individual killed himself at the end of the rampage.
Martial Law	Exists when military authorities carry on government or exercise various degrees of control over civilians or civilian authorities in domestic territory. MVEs have justified some violent plots and made threats based on a belief the implementation of martial law was imminent.
Molon labe (ΜΟΛΩΝ ΛΑΒΕ)	An ancient Greek expression translating roughly to “come and take them,” which some MVEs use to communicate their willingness to violently resist gun control.
New World Order (NWO)	A term some MVEs and other conspiracy theorists use to describe a supposed international plot to suspend American citizens’ civil liberties and institute a global, socialist government.
Oath Breaker	A phrase some MVEs use to describe law enforcement and government officials whom they believe have violated their oaths to uphold the Constitution, often related to gun rights and civil liberties.
Patriot Movement	A general term sometimes used to describe the loose affiliation between the militia movement, some members of the sovereign citizen movement, and tax protesters. Participation in the movement is not in itself sufficient basis for investigation.
Patriot Political Prisoner (P3)	A term some MVEs use to describe subjects who they believe have been unjustly prosecuted and incarcerated for engaging in MVE activities.
Prepping	A term used to describe the stockpiling of supplies, often including food, water, medical equipment, and weapons, in preparation for a major manmade or natural crisis. While this can include illegal explosives and illegally modified firearms, prepping is generally legal and is not in itself an indicator of militia violent extremism.
Quick Reaction Force (QRF)	A term MVEs sometimes adopt in order to describe their capability and willingness to respond to encounters or incidents between fellow MVEs and perceived adversaries such as law enforcement, often with the expectation that they will engage in violence to protect each other.
Red Flag	Red flag laws or extreme risk protection orders (ERPO) allow courts to issue orders temporarily confiscating firearms from individuals deemed to be a risk to themselves or others, typically at the petition of law enforcement or family members, but sometimes other individuals such as educators or health professionals. MVEs often regard such measures as unconstitutional and indicate they will respond violently if they or their companions are “red flagged.”
Shit Hits the Fan (SHTF)	An acronym MVEs and others often use referring to the major military, economic, political, or social crisis that militia organizations anticipate and prepare for as justification for their existence.
Three Percent and Three Percenter (III%, 3% or III%er, 3%er)	Refers to a militia-movement based on the myth that only three percent of Americans fought against the British during the American Revolutionary War. Adherents use the myth to pledge or justify their willingness to use force to resist restrictions on firearms or civil liberties against the present-day US Government and other government entities, which are viewed as akin to the British during the Revolution. Self-identification as a III%er or use of III% symbols should not independently be considered evidence of militia affiliation or illegal activity.
Unorganized Militia	A term used to describe the “Reserve Militia,” one of the two classes of the militia defined under The Militia Act of 1903, which some MVEs use to justify their activity. The other class is the “Organized Militia,” which consists of the National Guard and the Naval Militia.