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EXECUTIVE INTELLIGENCE BRIEF

June 14, 2021

Domestic Extremists Shift Focus Toward US Government

Domestic extremists have capitalized on wide-ranging anti-government sentiment to further their respective movements based on the US government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 Presidential election, and nationwide civil unrest. Prior to 2021, domestic extremists focused on perceived threats, such as those stemming from religious groups, counter-protest organizations, election fraud conspiracies, and government overreach. However, over the past year, the specific targets of anarchist, anti-government, militia, and white racially motivated extremists shifted primarily toward government representatives and facilities.

- Anarchist extremists will engage in protests leveraging civil unrest, advocating for direct action against local government entities and organizations with various political views to continue their opposition toward traditional power structures. During the past year, anarchist extremists have taken advantage of widespread civil unrest to conduct violence against law enforcement and individuals with opposing views. They will continue to commit criminal acts, such as vandalism focused on government offices and private businesses they believe participate in a capitalist economic system. Global conflicts, such as the Israeli-Palestinian events, are opportunities for extremists to exploit situations to sow further discord among various groups.
- Anti-government extremists remain committed to targeting politicians, political parties, and government officials that represent specific legislation or policy goals they oppose. In January, police in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, arrested an individual who shot several bullets into a Democratic Party office, which was empty at the time. The individual had previously sent a threatening email to party officials regarding what he believed was a “stolen election.”
 - o Furthermore, while the Boogaloo movement will continue to co-opt high-profile incidents to justify its opposition toward the government, it is likely that lone offenders will remain unpredictable due to motivations based on specific personal beliefs and not necessarily broader movements or national incidents.
- Militia extremists will act on opposing views from the federal government, citing government overreach on issues they believe restrict personal freedoms, such as gun control, and government inaction on issues surrounding immigration, primarily at the southern border. These issues may overlap with other extremist groups, such as domestic violent extremists and racially motivated extremists.
 - o Last year, Ammon Bundy, known for his anti-government views, launched a group called People’s Rights in response to COVID-19 restrictions. The organization has attracted thousands of members and sponsored more than 50 demonstrations across the country, including at the Idaho State Capitol, where Bundy was arrested after illegally entering the building. Even as COVID-19 restrictions begin to ease, militia groups shift their focus to align with other movements, such as anti-vaccination groups, participating in rallies that oppose the vaccine to further fuel their ideology and gain followers. Bundy and others have attempted to organize “Freedom Fighters” in anticipation of further standoffs with the federal government.
- While the apprehension and charging of individuals for their involvement in the attack on the US Capitol on January 6 is ongoing, approximately 500 individuals nationally have been charged thus far with rioting, assaulting federal officers, property crimes violations, and conspiracy. To date, 19 New Jersey residents have been arrested in connection with the siege. Two New Jersey residents associated with the Oath Keepers have been charged, while at least two individuals have potential links to the Proud Boys.
- White racially motivated extremists (WRMEs) will continue to advocate for and amplify violent action against the US government due to their belief that it will push the nation toward collapse. WRMEs have consistently reformed their propaganda narratives to fit national grievances to further push their ideology into the mainstream and deteriorate the public’s trust in the government. Some WRMEs will continue using tactics that include flyering and spreading violent rhetoric through online platforms in hopes of inspiring decentralized lone offenders to conduct attacks.
- Additionally, racially motivated extremists as a whole will take advantage of worldwide current events to incite violence against the Jewish and Asian American and Pacific Islander communities.
 - o In April, The Base, a neo-Nazi organization founded by a former New Jersey resident, began promoting its survivalism and self-defense training online after several months of silence. In the posts, The Base claims the trainings are offered to prepare supporters “for a hypothetical time in the future when law [and] order breaks down to such an extreme degree...that the authorities are unable or unwilling to restore it.”