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## Fighting Back: The Atomwaffen Division, Countering Violent Extremism, and the Evolving Crackdown on Far-Right Terrorism in America

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### **Abstract**

The early months of 2020 brought an intense and persistent crackdown on neo-Nazi terrorist groups in the United States, with both traditional arrests and new legislations increasing the pressure on a range of organizations, primarily the Atomwaffen Division and the Base. This article assesses the effectiveness of these measures, analyses remaining gaps, and concludes by arguing that the enduring focus on terrorist “organizations” will miss the lone actors that typically perpetrate attacks, and that effective and sustained counterterrorism success moving forward will therefore require longer-term, better-funded, whole-of-society deradicalization and countering violent extremism programming, which so far has been largely ignored in America’s countering far-right terrorism toolkit. The American far-right’s ideology exists largely due to conspiracy theories demonizing Jews, Muslims, African Americans, and liberals; deterring terrorism in our synagogues, mosques, churches, and supermarkets will require a new approach, founded on breaking down those conspiracy theories and ensuring that vulnerable individuals are no longer drawn in by hateful and pernicious ideologies.

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### **Introduction**

For years, the Atomwaffen Division freely threatened an onslaught of violence targeting Jews, Muslims, and African Americans across the United States and beyond. At one point, the organization, a neo-Nazi militant group based in the United States, was even under consideration for a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) designation by the U.S. Department

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of State, news that sent shockwaves through the far-right counterterrorism community.<sup>2</sup> The group announced its dissolution shortly after news broke of the impending FTO designation,<sup>3</sup> but by July 2020, its leaders announced a new venture, dubbed the National Socialist Order.<sup>4</sup> News of the network's rapid reemergence underscores a critical vulnerability in America's ongoing battle against far-right extremism: the efforts are short-term, piecemeal, and targeted at groups. They are not part of a broader strategy to tackle the ideology, undermine its conspiracy theories, and deter radicalization.

Groups like the Atomwaffen Division (AWD) and its National Socialist Order (NSO) offspring are the foremost exemplar of the latest wave of far-right militancy in the United States.<sup>5</sup> Unapologetically fascist, they emerge from a broader community of extremists who worship 60-something neo-Nazi activist James Mason and his *Siege*, a collection of newsletters published in the 1980s calling for race war in Western societies.<sup>6</sup> They are joined by others like the Base, a newer neo-Nazi collaborative with links in Canada, Sweden, and Russia, as well as a host of loosely-affiliated cousins throughout North America and Europe. Together, those groups and their supporters form the face of the new far-right in America and beyond—young, militant, public, and loud. Those four characteristics convinced American law enforcement and intelligence agencies that the threat Atomwaffen posed was significant and imminent. The response has been furious—and is evolving.

The Atomwaffen Division ultimately dodged the FTO designation, but in early April, the State Department announced it had designated the Russian Imperial Movement (RIM) as a

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<sup>2</sup> Natasha Bertrand, Nahal Toosi, and Daniel Lippman, "State pushes to list white supremacist group as terrorist org," *Politico*, March 9, 2020, <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/03/09/state-department-white-supremacist-group-124500>.

<sup>3</sup> Ben Makuch, "Audio Recording Claims Neo-Nazi Terror Group Is Disbanding," *Vice*, March 15, 2020, [https://www.vice.com/en\\_us/article/qjdnam/audio-recording-claims-neo-nazi-terror-group-is-disbanding](https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/qjdnam/audio-recording-claims-neo-nazi-terror-group-is-disbanding).

<sup>4</sup> Ben Makuch, "Neo-Nazi Terror Group Atomwaffen Division Re-Emerges Under New Name," *Vice*, August 5, 2020, [https://www.vice.com/en\\_us/article/wxq7jy/neo-nazi-terror-group-atomwaffen-division-re-emerges-under-new-name](https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/wxq7jy/neo-nazi-terror-group-atomwaffen-division-re-emerges-under-new-name).

<sup>5</sup> For more on the Atomwaffen Division, see Jacob Ware, "Siege: The Atomwaffen Division and Rising Far-Right Terrorism in the United States," *International Centre for Counter-Terrorism - The Hague*, July 2019, <https://icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/ICCT-Ware-Siege-July2019.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> "James Mason's Siege: Ties to Extremists," *Counter Extremism Project*, accessed April 28, 2020, <https://www.counterextremism.com/sites/default/files/james-mason-siege-ties-to-extremists.pdf>.

Specially Designated Global Terrorist (SDGT), a move that opens a host of financial counterterrorism tools.<sup>7</sup> The designation is the latest in a progressive intensification of law enforcement efforts against far-right terrorism in the United States and abroad. However, although short-term legislative changes will expand domestic law enforcement's mandate and tools and subsequently likely bolster its counterterrorism success, the absence of bolder and more transformative policies will likely prolong the fight against far-right extremism, particularly in the United States. Sustainable solutions to the problem will require a committed and well-financed counter-ideological strategy.

### **America Fights Back**

The law enforcement response to the Atomwaffen Division has been underway for several years, beginning with a possible intercepted attack in May 2017, when the group's leader, Brandon Russell, was arrested with another member on route to the Turkey Point Nuclear Generating Station in Florida.<sup>8</sup> Further arrests, both reactive and proactive, followed throughout 2018 and 2019, ultimately leading up to a large-scale, four-state operation to arrest five senior members of the group in February 2020.<sup>9</sup> The sweep included former leader John Cameron Denton of Montgomery, Texas, and apparent new leader Kaleb Cole of Arlington, Washington, who had long had run-ins with law enforcement.<sup>10</sup> The sweep responded to the

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<sup>7</sup> Charlie Savage, Adam Goldman, and Eric Schmitt, "U.S. Will Give Terrorist Label to White Supremacist Group for First Time," *New York Times*, April 6, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/06/us/politics/terrorist-label-white-supremacy-Russian-Imperial-Movement.html>.

<sup>8</sup> Frontline, "Documenting Hate: New American Nazis," *PBS*, November 20, 2018, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/documenting-hate-new-american-nazis/>.

<sup>9</sup> Rachel Weiner and Matt Zapotosky, "Five arrested, accused of targeting journalists as part of neo-Nazi Atomwaffen group," *Washington Post*, February 26, 2020, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/public-safety/propublica-named-him-as-an-atomwaffen-leader-feds-say-he-struck-back/2020/02/26/c9548ac4-57e5-11ea-ab68-101ecfec2532\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/public-safety/propublica-named-him-as-an-atomwaffen-leader-feds-say-he-struck-back/2020/02/26/c9548ac4-57e5-11ea-ab68-101ecfec2532_story.html).

<sup>10</sup> Ali Winston, "Atomwaffen Division's Washington State Cell Leader Stripped of Arsenal in U.S., Banned from Canada," *Daily Beast*, October 19, 2019, <https://www.thedailybeast.com/kaleb-james-cole-atomwaffen-divisions-washington-state-leader-stripped-of-arsenal-in-us-banned-from-canada>.

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Atomwaffen-initiated Operation Erste Säule, a broad, intense, and coordinated operation to call in threats to homes of journalists and politicians as well as places of worships.<sup>11</sup>

Despite their effectiveness in getting self-declared neo-Nazi terrorists off the street, the arrests showcased the challenges in investigating domestic extremism. Many of Atomwaffen's senior members, including Denton and Cole, had been publicly known since they were exposed in the media in early 2018.<sup>12</sup> And by then, the group had already held one of its so-called "hate camps," events where the group conducted military training and shot propaganda videos. Law enforcement interception was only possible once direct action was undertaken—and even then, individuals were not arrested for their affiliation to a self-declared terrorist group, but on a series of gun, drug, and threats-related charges. No case more convincingly demonstrated that the FBI's hands are prohibitively tied on domestic terrorism than that of an Atomwaffen member from Virginia. Despite his home being raided and being denied bail, the individual was only sentenced to one year and one day, after pleading guilty to "making a material false statement in relation to the purchase of a firearm and to possessing firearms while being an unlawful user of or addicted to controlled substances."<sup>13</sup> Compare that to the many Muslim Americans who have been convicted for providing or attempting to provide material support to the Islamic State—the average sentence is over 13 years.<sup>14</sup>

Law enforcement arrests have also been a leading tactic for the FBI in tackling other extremist groups. A sweeping round-up of members of the Base in the lead-up to a gun rights

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<sup>11</sup> Mike Baker, Adam Goldman, and Neil MacFarquhar, "White Supremacists Targeted Journalists and a Trump Official, F.B.I. Says," *New York Times*, February 26, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/26/us/atomwaffen-division-arrests.html>.

<sup>12</sup> A.C. Thompson, Ali Winston, and Jake Hanrahan, "Inside Atomwaffen As It Celebrates a Member for Allegedly Killing a Gay Jewish College Student," *ProPublica*, February 23, 2018, <https://www.propublica.org/article/atomwaffen-division-inside-white-hate-group>.

<sup>13</sup> "Atomwaffen Division Member Pleads Guilty to Firearms Charge," U.S. Department of Justice, Eastern District of Virginia, November 12, 2019, <https://www.justice.gov/usao-edva/pr/atomwaffen-division-member-pleads-guilty-firearms-charge>.

<sup>14</sup> "GW Extremism Tracker: ISIS in America," *GWU Program on Extremism*, October 2020, <https://extremism.gwu.edu/isis-america>.

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rally in Richmond, Virginia in January 2020 likely stopped several major terrorist plots.<sup>15</sup> The arrests followed infiltrations into the group, with an FBI agent going undercover for several months.<sup>16</sup> And several organizers of the August 2017 Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, Virginia—which turned violent—were arrested on charges including rioting.<sup>17</sup> The FBI’s frustration at its inability to press dedicated extremism or terrorism charges is showcased by its willingness to use whatever charge possible, from drug to gun to riot charges, to get possible future terrorists off the streets.<sup>18</sup> That frustration has likely directly inspired new legislation, most notably the proposed FTO designation levied on the Atomwaffen Division and the SDGT designation against RIM.

Beyond the current tools, counterterrorism researchers<sup>19</sup> (and some law enforcement officers<sup>20</sup>) have urgently called for more expansive means to tackle far-right extremism within and beyond America’s borders. Chief among the proposed policies is a new domestic terrorism statute, which would allow extremists intending to commit or having successfully committed attacks in the furtherance of political motivations to be formally prosecuted on a “terrorism” charge. As the threat continues to rise from far-right extremists, domestic terrorism legislation might allow the government to apply more resources to tackling the problem, including increased funding for the FBI.<sup>21</sup> And, as Mary McCord and Jason Blazakis argue, “enacting a federal crime of domestic terrorism would place it on the same moral plane

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<sup>15</sup> Michael Kunzelman, “Documents: Extremist group wanted rally to start civil war,” *Associated Press*, January 21, 2020, <https://apnews.com/e5d17a8735678aa604a22f011c2685db>.

<sup>16</sup> Alexander Mallin and Luke Barr, “Inside the neo-Nazi hate group ‘The Base,’ which is the center of an FBI investigation,” *ABC News*, January 23, 2020, <https://abcnews.go.com/US/inside-neo-nazi-hate-group-base-center-fbi/story?id=68459758>.

<sup>17</sup> “White supremacist members arrested on riot charges tied to Charlottesville,” *Guardian*, October 24, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/oct/24/white-supremacist-members-arrested-charlottesville-riot>.

<sup>18</sup> Zack Budryk, “FBI Agents Association calls on Congress to make ‘domestic terrorism’ a federal crime,” *Hill*, August 6, 2019, <https://thehill.com/policy/national-security/domestic-terrorism/456356-fbi-agents-association-calls-on-congress-to-make>.

<sup>19</sup> Jon Lewis and Seamus Hughes, “Our laws have a problem calling domestic terrorism what it is,” *Hill*, February 6, 2020, <https://thehill.com/opinion/national-security/481166-our-laws-have-a-problem-calling-domestic-terrorism-what-it-is>.

<sup>20</sup> Budryk, “FBI Agents Association calls on Congress to make ‘domestic terrorism’ a federal crime.”

<sup>21</sup> Jason M. Blazakis, “American Terrorists: Why Current Laws Are Inadequate for Violent Extremists at Home,” *Lawfare*, December 2, 2018, <https://www.lawfareblog.com/american-terrorists-why-current-laws-are-inadequate-violent-extremists-home>.

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as international terrorism.”<sup>22</sup> In an age where far-right terrorists now kill more Americans than jihadists, that is a critical next step.<sup>23</sup> However, such measures will still likely leave holes in the dragnet: they rely on good intelligence and convincing prosecutions. In cases where those conditions do not apply, America still risks leaving itself defenseless, for several reasons.

### Why The Problem Won't Go Away

The ongoing and intensifying domestic fight against white supremacist and neo-Nazi extremism and terrorism continues to raise several important questions regarding how and where to focus resources—as well as how much we are willing to sacrifice for the fight. The actual impact of these counterterrorism measures remains to be seen, and only time will tell what the crackdown on Atomwaffen and the Base will mean for the enduring relevance of the groups. Atomwaffen announced on March 9 that the group had disbanded, with James Mason, the group’s ideological pilot, declaring that “over the course of past weeks and months, the level and degree of federal infiltration and the numerous arrests stemming from that have so severely hampered the group’s ability to function as a group that it would be pointless to even pretend that anything resembling organizational activity could continue.”<sup>24</sup> However, there is, so far, little indication that law enforcement efforts against Atomwaffen are successfully pushing back against America’s online far-right extremist movement as a whole. In fact, as mentioned, former senior Atomwaffen leaders have already announced their next organization. And, as 2020 turns to 2021, America is arguably more polarized than ever, with

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<sup>22</sup> Mary B. McCord and Jason M. Blazakis, “A Road Map for Congress to Address Domestic Terrorism,” *Lawfare*, February 27, 2019, <https://www.lawfareblog.com/road-map-congress-address-domestic-terrorism>.

<sup>23</sup> Daniel Byman, “Right-Wingers Are America’s Deadliest Terrorists,” *Slate*, August 5, 2019, <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2019/08/right-wing-terrorist-killings-government-focus-jihadis-islamic-radicalism.html>.

<sup>24</sup> Makuch, “Audio Recording Claims Neo-Nazi Terror Group Is Disbanding.”

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white supremacists and neo-Nazis joined by more nascent movements, including QAnon and the so-called “boogaloo,” in providing imminent threats to the homeland.<sup>25</sup>

Atomwaffen was the tip of the spear of a new wave of far-right extremism in the United States and Europe. In several of its characteristics, the group represented a much broader community of extremist individuals and groups, including the Base, Atomwaffen affiliates Sonnenkrieg in the UK, Feuerkrieg in the Baltics, and AWD Deutschland in Germany, as well as a seemingly endless supply of smaller groups which pop up on social media sites including Telegram and Gab.

First of all, any discussion of the Atomwaffen Division, Nationalist Socialist Order, and groups like them must fundamentally engage with the reality that all the deadliest violence in the current far-right wave—including attacks in Charleston, Pittsburgh, Poway, and El Paso—has come from individuals acting alone, *not* groups.<sup>26</sup> Atomwaffen was responsible for sporadic violence, including a homophobic and anti-Semitic murder in California in January 2018<sup>27</sup> and a double murder in Virginia in December 2017,<sup>28</sup> but its members, like its many offshoots and its counterparts in the Base, did not commit any indiscriminate terrorist attacks. As scholar Paul Jackson notes, “such groups are not developing centrally directed terrorist attacks. Rather their role in violent radicalization is to help intensify and deepen wider vulnerabilities among some of their members.”<sup>29</sup> The evidence can be found not only with the Atomwaffen Division—which has never successfully

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<sup>25</sup> Bruce Hoffman and Jacob Ware, “The Terrorist Threat from the Fractured Far Right,” *Lawfare*, November 1, 2020, <https://www.lawfareblog.com/terrorist-threat-fractured-far-right>.

<sup>26</sup> For more on “lone wolf terrorism,” see Mark S. Hamm and Ramón Spaaij, *The Age of Lone Wolf Terrorism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017).

<sup>27</sup> Molly Olmstead, “The Suspect in the Killing of Blaze Bernstein Belonged to a Neo-Nazi Group Allegedly Connected to Four Other Murders,” *Slate*, January 31, 2018, <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2018/01/atomwaffen-division-blaze-bernstiens-suspected-killer-was-part-of-neo-nazi-group-tied-to-other-murders.html>.

<sup>28</sup> Justin Jouvenal, “Va. teen accused of killing girlfriend’s parents to be tried as an adult,” *Washington Post*, September 24, 2019, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/public-safety/va-teen-accused-of-killing-girlfriends-parents-to-be-tried-as-an-adult/2019/09/24/3e628fae-af13-11e9-a0c9-6d2d7818f3da\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/public-safety/va-teen-accused-of-killing-girlfriends-parents-to-be-tried-as-an-adult/2019/09/24/3e628fae-af13-11e9-a0c9-6d2d7818f3da_story.html).

<sup>29</sup> Paul Jackson, “Transnational Neo-Nazism in the USA, United Kingdom and Australia,” *GWU Program on Extremism*, February 2020, 28, <https://extremism.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs2191/f/Jackson%20-%20Transnational%20neo%20Nazism%20in%20the%20USA%2C%20United%20Kingdom%20and%20Australia.pdf>.

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coordinated or directed its members to commit an act of terrorism, and which has only inspired lone actors to violence—but with the broader movement: this wave’s deadliest terrorists, including Anders Breivik, Brenton Tarrant, Patrick Crusius, Robert Bowers, and Dylann Roof, have all acted alone, without any direction or input from an established and known terrorist organization.<sup>30</sup> The new National Socialist Order promises to continue promoting that strategy: “We are dedicated to promoting radical autonomy while fomenting a revolutionary atmosphere.”<sup>31</sup>

The crackdown on Atomwaffen reduces the immediate terrorism threat, but it does not alleviate the pressure to find (or the challenges in finding<sup>32</sup>) those actually plotting violence, who often do not leave a footprint until the very last minute.<sup>33</sup> FTO or SDGT designations, for instance, would be largely useless for extremists operating outside organizations, including the perpetrators of the attacks listed above. Our attention on extremist organizations that do show their face should not come at the expense of searching for the needle in the haystack that is actually mobilizing to violence.

Secondly, the group was overwhelmingly young. By April 2020, the group had seen at least 14 members arrested in the United States; none were over the age of 30. The group’s three known convicted or alleged murderers to date have been 20 or younger.<sup>34</sup> Nicholas Giampa, double murderer, had at just 17 “drifted beyond the trolling of his teenage peers on the internet far-right and was fully in thrall to the racist, apocalyptic fantasia of white

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<sup>30</sup> For more on lone wolf terrorism and the far right, see Bruce Hoffman, “Back to the Future: The Return of Violent Far-Right Terrorism in the Age of Lone Wolves,” *War on the Rocks*, April 2, 2019, <https://warontherocks.com/2019/04/back-to-the-future-the-return-of-violent-far-right-terrorism-in-the-age-of-lone-wolves/>.

<sup>31</sup> Document reviewed by author.

<sup>32</sup> Daniel Byman, “Can Lone Wolves Be Stopped?” *Lawfare*, March 15, 2017, <https://www.lawfareblog.com/can-lone-wolves-be-stopped>.

<sup>33</sup> Edwin Bakker and Beatrice de Graaf, “Preventing Lone Wolf Terrorism: some CT Approaches Addressed,” *Perspectives on Terrorism* 5, no. 5/6 (December 2011), 46, [https://www.jstor.org/stable/26298538#metadata\\_info\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/26298538#metadata_info_tab_contents).

<sup>34</sup> Devon Arthurs was 18, Nicholas Giampa was 17, Sam Woodward was 20. Greg Myre, “Deadly Connection: Neo-Nazi Group Linked To 3 Accused Killers,” *NPR*, March 6, 2018, <https://www.npr.org/2018/03/06/590292705/5-killings-3-states-and-1-common-neo-nazi-link>.



nationalism.”<sup>35</sup> The Base is also generally very young. During a roundup of group members in January 2020, law enforcement arrested seven individuals across three states, average age 24, and going as young as two 19-year-olds.<sup>36</sup> That number does not include an additional 18-year-old earlier arrested in New Jersey.<sup>37</sup> A report released by British counter-extremism group Hope Not Hate in September 2020 detailed the extent of the issue, “[shedding] light on a dangerous and tragic emerging trend within the international extreme far-right.” The report, in particular, detailed the existence in Britain of a nascent extremist group, called the British Hand, led by a 15-year-old.<sup>38</sup> But perhaps no case more shockingly illustrates the youth that characterizes this movement than the recent capture of a leader of the Feuerkrieg Division, an affiliate of Atomwaffen in the Baltics: he was just 13.<sup>39</sup> Neo-Nazi, “accelerationist” ideology, and the groups who spread its vision, are speaking to individuals sometimes too young to even be enrolled in high school.

Thirdly, and relatedly, the group mobilized largely online. Atomwaffen emerged from the Iron March neo-Nazi forum, among supporters who did not feel online activism went far enough.<sup>40</sup> From its early days, AWD existed primarily on dark chat rooms, with strict encryption but porous entry controls periodically punctured by journalists and law enforcement. And the group rose to notoriety not because of real-world direct action, but

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<sup>35</sup> Jessica Schulberg and Luke O’Brien, “We Found The Neo-Nazi Twitter Account Tied To A Virginia Double Homicide,” *Huffington Post*, January 4, 2018, [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/nicholas-giampa-neo-nazi-teenager-murder-girlfriends-parents-virginia\\_n\\_5a4d0797e4b0b0e5a7aa4780](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/nicholas-giampa-neo-nazi-teenager-murder-girlfriends-parents-virginia_n_5a4d0797e4b0b0e5a7aa4780).

<sup>36</sup> Arrests were made in Georgia, Maryland, and Wisconsin. See Bill Chappell, Merrit Kennedy, and Vanessa Romo, “3 Alleged Members Of Hate Group ‘The Base’ Arrested In Georgia, Another In Wisconsin,” *NPR*, January 17, 2020, <https://www.npr.org/2020/01/17/797399834/3-alleged-members-of-hate-group-the-base-arrested-in-georgia>; and Jessica Anderson, “FBI arrests alleged white supremacists from Maryland before Virginia gun rally; detention hearings set,” *Baltimore Sun*, January 16, 2020, <https://www.baltimoresun.com/news/crime/bs-md-cr-alleged-white-supremacist-members-charged-20200116-ybghual5yjc5pehu6fes4ooyne-story.html>.

<sup>37</sup> Kelly Weill, “Why Arrest of Richard Tobin Is Bad News for Neo-Nazi Group The Base,” *Daily Beast*, November 18, 2019, <https://www.thedailybeast.com/why-arrest-of-richard-tobin-is-bad-news-for-neo-nazi-group-the-base>.

<sup>38</sup> Patrik Hermansson, “Hitler Youths: The Rise of Teenage Far-Right Terrorists,” *Hope Not Hate*, September 2020, [https://www.hopenothate.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/HnH\\_Hitler-Youths-report\\_2020-09-v2.pdf](https://www.hopenothate.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/HnH_Hitler-Youths-report_2020-09-v2.pdf).

<sup>39</sup> “Estonian Police Identify ‘Key Figure’ in International Neo-Nazi Hate Group. He’s 13 Years Old,” *TIME*, April 13, 2020, <https://time.com/5820178/neo-nazi-group-estonia-commander-child/>.

<sup>40</sup> Ware, “Siege: The Atomwaffen Division and Rising Far-Right Terrorism in the United States.”

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because of its impressive and highly-sophisticated propaganda operation, spearheaded by well-produced videos of the group's "hate camp" training camps in the American wilderness. Arrests do break the offline/online divide, but as long as an individual's perceived anonymity remains relatively safe online, the virtual communities will remain vibrant.<sup>41</sup> The National Socialist Order will likely pose new challenges in the online space: they have vowed to be harder to infiltrate, promising that "we're going to keep people from, if they do anything illegal—which we don't encourage or discourage—we're going to keep them from talking about it online."<sup>42</sup> The group's malleability online also highlights the likely futility of any grand measures targeted at the "organization:" if Atomwaffen had been designated as an FTO, it may have just disbanded and rebranded, with very few bureaucratic or hierarchical formalities holding the group together as "Atomwaffen."

Fourth, and directly stemming from the heavy social media focus, the group prided itself on vicious rhetoric. At its height, Atomwaffen's ranks included a 20-year-old who claimed that the best part of a gun is "the part that kills 30 babies per trigger pull;"<sup>43</sup> an 18-year-old Marine who gleefully reported "today cracked 3 skulls open with virtually no damage to myself" after the Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, Virginia in August 2017;<sup>44</sup> and an 18-year-old who called suicide bombings "pretty badass" and organized another group's operation to vandalize synagogues, calling it "Operation Kristallnacht" and declaring "if there's a window that wants to be broken, don't be shy."<sup>45</sup> Vicious rhetoric

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<sup>41</sup> Daniel Koehler, "The Radical Online: Individual Radicalization Processes and the Role of the Internet," *Journal for Deradicalization* 1 (Winter 2014/15), <http://journals.sfu.ca/jd/index.php/jd/article/view/8>.

<sup>42</sup> Makuch, "Neo-Nazi Terror Group Atomwaffen Division Re-Emerges Under New Name."

<sup>43</sup> Kelly Weill, "Feds Feared Alleged 'Neo-Nazi' Benjamin Bogard Could Be Next Mass Shooter," *Daily Beast*, February 28, 2019, <https://www.thedailybeast.com/feds-feared-alleged-neo-nazi-benjamin-bogard-could-be-next-mass-shooter>.

<sup>44</sup> A.C. Thompson, Ali Winston, and Jake Hanrahan, "Ranks of Notorious Hate Group Include Active-Duty Military," *ProPublica*, May 3, 2018, <https://www.propublica.org/article/atomwaffen-division-hate-group-active-duty-military>.

<sup>45</sup> Weill, "Why Arrest of Richard Tobin Is Bad News for Neo-Nazi Group The Base." Richard Tobin was also a member of Atomwaffen. See Mack Lamoureux, Ben Makuch, and Zachary Kamel, "Man Arrested for Synagogue Vandalism Was Active in Two Militant Neo-Nazi Groups," *Vice*, November 20, 2019, [https://www.vice.com/en\\_us/article/pa75jk/man-arrested-for-synagogue-vandalism-was-active-in-two-militant-neo-nazi-groups](https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/pa75jk/man-arrested-for-synagogue-vandalism-was-active-in-two-militant-neo-nazi-groups).

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creates echo chambers of likeminded extremists sharing increasingly radical language and plans—what Jerrold M. Post, Cody McGinnis, and Kristen Moody have called “the virtual community of hatred.”<sup>46</sup> Such a scenario, they suggest, raises the possibility of breakaway lone actor violence.

Fifth, and again largely due to the unique power of social media, the Atomwaffen Division, and the legacy it left after its dissolution, is a fairly international movement. AWD, as mentioned, sparked multiple known offshoots, including in Canada, the UK, Germany, and the Baltics, some of which have announced their intention to continue operations. The group’s founder, Brandon Russell, had even been in contact with the Azov Battalion, a military regiment in Ukraine with far-right links, claiming to be “an avid supporter of the Azov Battalion” and asking for “some advice from you about my militia that I lead in the US.”<sup>47</sup> Atomwaffen’s network stretches as far as Australia; its members had been in contact with the Melbourne-formed Antipodean Resistance, a group with similar aims.<sup>48</sup> The Base, meanwhile, reportedly holds membership in four continents, and its leadership is in Russia.<sup>49</sup> The threat posed by transatlantic neo-Nazism was also illustrated in the recent case of a U.S. Army soldier arrested for sharing classified information with the far-right cult Order of Nine Angles. The American private, Ethan Melzer, was stationed in Italy and leaked his own unit’s movements to the British group in the hopes of sparking a jihadist attack in Turkey.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Jerrold M. Post, Cody McGinnis, and Kristen Moody, “The Changing Face of Terrorism in the 21st Century: The Communications Revolution and the Virtual Community of Hatred,” *Behavioral Sciences & the Law* 32, no. 3 (May/June 2014): 306-334, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/bsl.2123>.

<sup>47</sup> Tim Lister, “The Nexus Between Far-Right Extremists in the United States and Ukraine,” *CTC Sentinel* 13, no. 4 (April 2020): 36, <https://ctc.usma.edu/the-nexus-between-far-right-extremists-in-the-united-states-and-ukraine/>.

<sup>48</sup> Julie Nathan, “Antipodean Resistance: The Rise and Goals of Australia’s New Nazis,” *ABC*, April 20, 2018, <https://www.abc.net.au/religion/antipodean-resistance-the-rise-and-goals-of-australias-new-nazis/10094794>.

<sup>49</sup> Benjamin Wallace, “The Prep-School Nazi,” *New York*, March 30, 2020, <https://nymag.com/intelligencer/2020/03/rinaldo-nazzaro-the-base-norman-spear.html>.

<sup>50</sup> “US soldier Ethan Melzer accused of planning attack on own unit,” *BBC*, June 23, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-53145806>.

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And finally, as mentioned, the group and its following existed in a broader “*Siege*” ecosystem, which remains vibrant on social media sites like Telegram.<sup>51</sup> *Siege*, written by neo-Nazi activist James Mason in the 1980s, advocates for leaderless violence against “the System” and perceived enemies of the white race, including Jews and African Americans.<sup>52</sup> The group found his writings relatively early in its existence, and Mason grew to become a significant figure within the organization, not just as an ideological mentor and advisor, but as the eventual announcer of the group’s dissolution. Notably, *Siege* has been a significant inspiration in this wave’s “accelerationism” strategy, which aims to speed up society’s collapse through race war and chaotic violence, and which has been embraced by Atomwaffen’s branches in Europe as well as by the Base.<sup>53</sup> So-called “Siege Culture”—also the name of a website dedicated to the mindset—now represents a distinct ideology, which the Counter Extremism Project estimates has inspired 12 extremist organizations.<sup>54</sup> It is unlikely to be punctured by superficial pinpricks against individual groups. In fact, *Siege* remains on the required reading list for the new National Socialist Order.<sup>55</sup>

There is also an issue raised earlier: convicted Atomwaffen members, like their counterparts in the Base, did not receive long jail sentences. Brandon Russell—despite being a known leader of Atomwaffen, having a framed photograph of Timothy McVeigh on his desk, owning copies of *Mein Kampf* and the far-right’s hallowed *The Turner Diaries*, and possessing bomb-making materials—was sentenced to just five years.<sup>56</sup> And while recent research conducted by Thomas Renard suggests that terrorists rarely reoffend, and that “the

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<sup>51</sup> “Atomwaffen and the SIEGE parallax: how one neo-Nazi’s life’s work is fueling a younger generation,” *Southern Poverty Law Center*, February 22, 2018, <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2018/02/22/atomwaffen-and-siege-parallax-how-one-neo-nazi%E2%80%99s-life%E2%80%99s-work-fueling-younger-generation>.

<sup>52</sup> “Atomwaffen and the SIEGE parallax: how one neo-Nazi’s life’s work is fueling a younger generation.”

<sup>53</sup> Zack Beauchamp, “Accelerationism: the obscure idea inspiring white supremacist killers around the world,” *Vox*, November 18, 2019, <https://www.vox.com/the-highlight/2019/11/11/20882005/accelerationism-white-supremacy-christchurch>.

<sup>54</sup> “James Mason’s Siege: Ties to Extremists,” *Counter Extremism Project*, accessed April 28, 2020, <https://www.counterextremism.com/sites/default/files/james-mason-siege-ties-to-extremists.pdf>.

<sup>55</sup> Document reviewed by author.

<sup>56</sup> “Florida Neo-Nazi leader gets 5 years for having explosive material,” *NBC News*, January 9, 2018, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/florida-neo-nazi-leader-gets-5-years-having-explosive-material-n836246>.

fear of recidivism appears to be disproportionate compared to its actual occurrence,”<sup>57</sup> Russell successfully released propaganda from prison, suggesting his views or commitment to the organization are not moderating behind bars.<sup>58</sup> He is due out in 2022. In an “AWD Program” the group shared with members, its leaders declared, “we don’t want to be caught in the cogs of the machine when it all breaks, the objective is to outlast this madness.”<sup>59</sup> The group may have disbanded and ceased operations, but its members were always in the fight for the long haul.

The characteristics outlined above highlight the fatal flaw with the U.S.’s current strategy: the group and broader movement’s prioritization of lone wolf terrorism, youthfulness, social media competence, vicious rhetoric, international linkages, and adherence to *Siege* ideology and “accelerationism” are unlikely to be suppressed by just continuing arrests. The U.S. government, as well as its allies in Canada and Europe, need to think bigger, bolder, and longer-term. As Farah Pandith, countering violent extremism (CVE) pioneer and former State Department Special Representative to Muslim Communities, wrote of the failing battle against Islamist extremism in her CVE bible *How We Win*, “we lacked the extremists’ strong ideological focus. That we didn’t act more boldly when we could have will go down in history as, at the very least, a tremendous missed opportunity.”<sup>60</sup> We should not miss a similar opportunity to address the long-term, underlying grievances behind far-right extremism, or indeed the opportunity to deal the movement a decisive and insurmountable blow.

Of course, Atomwaffen and the broader *Siege* network represent just one of many far-right extremist threats to the American public, but the seriousness with which law enforcement and intelligence agencies dealt with the threat, and the extent to which the groups

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<sup>57</sup> Thomas Renard, “Overblown: Exploring the Gap Between the Fear of Terrorist Recidivism and the Evidence,” *CTC Sentinel* 13, no. 4 (April 2020): 26, <https://ctc.usma.edu/overblown-exploring-the-gap-between-the-fear-of-terrorist-recidivism-and-the-evidence/>.

<sup>58</sup> Janet Reitman, “How Did a Convicted Neo-Nazi Release Propaganda From Prison?” *Rolling Stone*, May 25, 2018, <https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/politics-news/how-did-a-convicted-neo-nazi-release-propaganda-from-prison-628437/>.

<sup>59</sup> Document reviewed by author.

<sup>60</sup> Farah Pandith, *How We Win: How Cutting-Edge Entrepreneurs, Political Visionaries, Enlightened Business Leaders, and Social Media Mavens Can Defeat the Extremist Threat* (New York: Custom House, 2019), 28.

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were infiltrated and their members arrested and prosecuted, indicates the network was deemed more dangerous than others. As the far-right extremist fringe unleashed a cacophony of violence throughout 2018 and 2019, the FBI effectively dismantled that organization. Since AWD suffered its most aggressive law enforcement crackdown, the far-right threat has fractured—there is no longer only a primary, almost predictable threat from white supremacists and neo-Nazis, but those extremists have been joined by a resurgent anti-government community calling itself the “boogaloo,” conspiracy theorists like QAnon growing increasingly emboldened, as well as movements opposed to coronavirus lockdowns.<sup>61</sup> The track record suggests strict white supremacists and neo-Nazis like the National Socialist Order will remain a counterterrorism priority—although that does not mean other networks will, or should, be ignored. Fortunately, the aforementioned characteristics also apply to other factions of the extreme far-right, suggesting bolder, more ambitious measures targeting the aspects that made Atomwaffen so dangerous will also yield successes in fighting the broader movement.

### Countering Far-Right Violent Extremism

The search for new counterterrorism tools, remaining gaps, and reasons why the problem endures all point to the lack of a broader strategy, a longer-term plan to effectively and comprehensively combat far-right extremist ideology in the United States. The U.S., like many of its European counterparts, is sorely lacking an effective and committed countering violent extremism plan and infrastructure. More than likely, until the U.S. government decides to invest more in cleverer and more ambitious plans to tackle extremism and divisiveness, the problem will persist. It is past time to take the ideological battle more seriously. An effective CVE strategy will consist of four priorities: breaking down deeply-entrenched conspiracy theories both online and offline, developing social media-based

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<sup>61</sup> Hoffman and Ware, “The Terrorist Threat from the Fractured Far Right.”

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counter-radicalization tools, embracing a whole-of-society approach, and expanding exit paths.

Firstly, and most essentially, CVE targeting far-right extremism in the United States must aim to tackle long-lasting conspiracy theories demonizing racial and religious minorities as well as the political left, which research suggests are an essential ingredient in political extremism.<sup>62</sup> Atomwaffen existed on a series of theories warning of apparent imminent danger facing the white race, including the Zionist Occupied Government (ZOG) theory, which holds that the U.S. government is controlled by a secretive Jewish cabal, as well as “white genocide” and “great replacement” theories, which claim that white Westerners are suffering from a deliberate effort to replace the race.<sup>63</sup> But the problem is broader, and the difficulty in effectively and sustainably challenging conspiracy theories is evidenced by their level of support. As David Neiwert recalls in *Alt-America: The Rise of the Radical Right in the Age of Trump*, U.S. polling from 2013 indicated that “28 percent of voters believed that a secret power elite with a globalist agenda is conspiring eventually to rule the world through an authoritarian world government, or New World Order,” a theory that is a close relative of its more anti-Semitic ZOG cousin.<sup>64</sup> Meanwhile, the “Infowars” website run by famed conspiracist Alex Jones, who claimed that the devastating 2012 Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting was a liberal hoax designed to strip Americans of their gun rights, still has several hundred thousand visitors every day, despite his ban from most mainstream social media channels.<sup>65</sup> Such numbers highlight why the ideological fight over conspiracy theories is likely the strategic center of gravity in the West’s war against far-right extremism.

Incidentally, beyond Atomwaffen, the role played by conspiracy theories within the broader radical right ecosystem has been displayed to devastating effect during the

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<sup>62</sup> Jan-Willem van Prooijen, André P. M. Krouwel, and Thomas V. Pollet, “Political Extremism Predicts Belief in Conspiracy Theories,” *Social Psychological and Personality Science* 6, no. 5 (July 2015): 570-78, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1948550614567356?journalCode=sppa>.

<sup>63</sup> Ware, “Siege: The Atomwaffen Division and Rising Far-Right Terrorism in the United States.”

<sup>64</sup> David Neiwert, *Alt-America: The Rise of the Radical Right in the Age of Trump* (New York: Verso, 2017), 47.

<sup>65</sup> Jack Nicas, “Alex Jones Said Bans Would Strengthen Him. He Was Wrong.” *New York Times*, September 4, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/04/technology/alex-jones-infowars-bans-traffic.html>.

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coronavirus pandemic. Most notably, a string of theories claiming the illness to be a hoax has resulted in threats aimed at hospitals and nursing homes, including attempted bombings at a hospital in Belton, Missouri,<sup>66</sup> and a similar incident at a Jewish assisted-living facility in Longmeadow, Massachusetts.<sup>67</sup> In the United Kingdom and Europe, conspiracy theories linking the virus to 5G technology has resulted in dozens of arson attacks against cell towers. As Alexander Meleagrou-Hitchens and Blyth Crawford note, “not since 9/11 has a global event given so much opportunity to conspiracy theorists as the novel coronavirus pandemic.”<sup>68</sup>

The theorists’ weaponization of the coronavirus has also led analysts and scholars to suggest tools for pushing back against conspiracies. Research suggests that conspiracy theories emerge in societies where distrust reigns: psychologists Michael J. Wood and Karen M. Douglas, for instance, previously found that “the coherence of the conspiracist belief system is driven by higher-order considerations such as a disbelief in official narratives, rather than positive beliefs in particular alternative narratives.”<sup>69</sup> That conclusion would suggest restoring trust in “official narratives,” perhaps by undermining the ongoing, transatlantic assault on the free press, to be essential. Stephan Lewandowsky and John Cook, experts on conspiracy theories, argued that slowing the spread of falsehoods is also essential: “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Efforts should therefore focus on protecting the public

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<sup>66</sup> Pete Williams, “Missouri man planned to bomb hospital during pandemic to get attention for white supremacist views,” *NBC News*, March 30, 2020, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/missouri-man-planned-bomb-hospital-during-pandemic-get-attention-white-n1172346>.

<sup>67</sup> Julie Zauzmer, “Man charged with planting a bomb at a Jewish assisted-living home in apparent anti-Semitic attack in Massachusetts,” *Washington Post*, April 16, 2020, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/religion/2020/04/16/massachusetts-man-charged-with-planting-bomb-jewish-assisted-living-home-apparent-anti-semitic-attack/>.

<sup>68</sup> Alexander Meleagrou-Hitchens and Blyth Crawford, “5G and the Far Right: How Extremists Capitalise on Coronavirus Conspiracies,” *Global Network on Extremism & Technology*, April 21, 2020, <https://gnet-research.org/2020/04/21/5g-and-the-far-right-how-extremists-capitalise-on-coronavirus-conspiracies/>.

<sup>69</sup> Michael J. Wood and Karen M. Douglas, ““What about building 7?” A social psychological study of online discussion of 9/11 conspiracy theories,” *Frontiers in Psychology* 4 (2013): <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2013.00409/full>.



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from exposure to those theories, by inhibiting or slowing the spread of conspiracy theories.”<sup>70</sup> In the coronavirus case study, the opportunity is already lost; the theories are now widespread among the radical right, which has repeatedly engaged in mass protests in defiance of stay-at-home orders.<sup>71</sup> But preventing young, vulnerable individuals from exposure to the next hostile falsehoods sustaining the radical right online could deter future radicalization.

Of course, there is a delicate balance to be struck, particularly if government is involved: as legal scholars Cass R. Sunstein and Adrian Vermeule write, “one problem is that [government’s] efforts might be counterproductive, because efforts to rebut conspiracy theories also legitimate them.”<sup>72</sup> In the social media age, we are only beginning to understand how conspiracy theories take hold online and poison unsuspecting minds, and more research is needed. Breaking down entrenched conspiracy theories targeting minorities, and enacting an infrastructure to prevent the easy dissemination of new theories explaining national crises, are both essential in the fight against the violent far-right.

Secondly, and relatedly, a CVE strategy should devote considerable attention and resources to preventing radicalization on social media sites, another key battleground in the war against far-right terrorism. A successful strategy will work at three levels: avoiding initial radicalization, disincentivizing entrenchment in the movement, and providing long-term immunity from future recruitment. The so-called “redirect method” pioneered by organizations such as Moonshot CVE targets the first points and has shown promise in limited deployment. An early test of the redirect method, conducted across six months and in every U.S. county in 2019, showed “that the at-risk audience consumed over 6,000 minutes of alternative content—time that could have been spent consuming violent extremist content instead.” Notably, it also showed potential for dramatic scaling; more funds and manpower

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<sup>70</sup> Stephan Lewandowsky and John Cook, *The Conspiracy Theory Handbook* (2020),

<https://www.climatechangecommunication.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/ConspiracyTheoryHandbook.pdf>.

<sup>71</sup> Jason Wilson, “The rightwing groups behind wave of protests against Covid-19 restrictions,” *Guardian*, April 17, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/17/far-right-coronavirus-protests-restrictions>.

<sup>72</sup> Cass R. Sunstein and Adrian Vermeule, “Conspiracy Theories: Causes and Cures,” *Journal of Political Philosophy* 17, no. 2 (2009): 226, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1467-9760.2008.00325.x>.

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could see such a program implemented both at macro scale, on both sides of the Atlantic, as well as at the local level, targeted for extremist hotspots.<sup>73</sup>

Crucially, the redirect method has endorsement from the highest levels of the U.S. government's counterterrorism structure: Russell Travers, a longtime intelligence official and former acting director of the National Counterterrorism Center, said "I think in general that U.S. government work in the prevention space has been a little bit slow in coming, but this strikes us as a very worthwhile program that should continue. Anything you can do to stop individuals from consuming the kind of very gruesome radicalization potential that you see on the internet and take them someplace else — just common sense tells me that is a good thing to do."<sup>74</sup> The program's founders are similarly encouraged by early pilot programs. "The deployment of the Redirect Method shows promising results, lends itself to measuring results, and is inherently scalable," Ryan Greer and Vidhya Ramalingam, respectively of the Anti-Defamation League and Moonshot CVE, said. "When scaled, it could be the missing link between the online and offline space in the fight against violent extremism across the United States."<sup>75</sup> Moonshot CVE conducted an evaluation of a pilot Facebook redirect program, concluding in November 2020 that the program had been "broadly successful," but imperfect, and that "It is now critical that those problems and the risks they created are addressed and minimised, so that the programme can evolve from being functional to fully operational."<sup>76</sup>

A redirect method is just one of many potential tools to be deployed online to protect the young and curious from extremisms. Radicalization and extremist recruitment is not just a question of hostility, but also vulnerability: as John Venhaus wrote of recruitment into al-Qaeda, the allure of extremism is particularly powerful for "The Status Seeker: Looking for Recognition" and "The Identity Seeker: Looking for a Place to Belong" (as well as "Revenge"

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<sup>73</sup> Ryan Greer and Vidhya Ramalingam, "The Search for Extremism: Deploying the Redirect Method," *Washington Institute*, February 27, 2020, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-search-for-extremism-deploying-the-redirect-method/>.

<sup>74</sup> Neil MacFarquhar, "White Extremism Faces a Subversive Foe Online: Google Ads," *New York Times*, December 30, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/30/us/white-supremacy-moonshot-google-ads.html>.

<sup>75</sup> Greer and Ramalingam, "The Search for Extremism: Deploying the Redirect Method."

<sup>76</sup> "From passive search to active conversation: An evaluation of the Facebook Redirect Programme," *Moonshot CVE*, November 2020, <http://moonshotcve.com/facebook-redirect-programme-evaluation-report/>.

and “Thrill Seekers”).<sup>77</sup> Such push factors undoubtedly fueled recruitment to Atomwaffen; as one defense attorney said on behalf of her AWD client, who claimed to have renounced the movement, he was “susceptible to radicalization” because “he has never felt like he fit in.”<sup>78</sup> A proven and tested system that can identify vulnerable young people on social media (most notably those with histories of mental health issues and/or who have suffered bullying), arrest their progression into extremist ideology and communities, and turn them into productive and peaceful citizens could revolutionize counterterrorism—both against the far-right as well as other extremist movements who similarly prey on the young and vulnerable. Notably, our efforts to prevent the spread of extremist material online should not merely rely on removing sites and blocking individuals. As Tore Bjørgo and Jacob Aasland Ravndal note, “closing down specific extremist sites may have a short-time disruption effect but will only lead to a cat-and-mouse game and make it more difficult to monitor them.”<sup>79</sup>

Thirdly, CVE targeting domestic extremist ideologies must broaden the number of actors and stakeholders, moving beyond a (currently nonexistent) whole-of-government structure towards a whole-of-society strategy. As Eric Rosand, formerly a senior CVE official at the U.S. State Department, argues, “we need a national framework that includes an ecosystem of actors and programs that extends beyond law enforcement and involves mental health professionals, social workers, teachers, religious and other community leaders, parents, nongovernmental organizations, and the private sector (beyond just social media companies).”<sup>80</sup> Each of these critical professions offers something unique to the counter-

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<sup>77</sup> The other two categories are “revenge” seekers and “thrill” seekers. John Venhaus, “Why Youth Join Al-Qaeda,” *United States Institute of Peace Special Report*, May 2010, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2010/05/why-youth-join-al-qaeda>.

<sup>78</sup> Rachel Weiner, “After renouncing white supremacist ideology, Virginia man sentenced to year in prison,” *Washington Post*, February 28, 2020, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/public-safety/after-renouncing-white-supremacist-ideology-virginia-atomwaffen-leader-sentenced-to-year-in-prison/2020/02/28/9e7c9d28-5975-11ea-9b35-def5a027d470\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/public-safety/after-renouncing-white-supremacist-ideology-virginia-atomwaffen-leader-sentenced-to-year-in-prison/2020/02/28/9e7c9d28-5975-11ea-9b35-def5a027d470_story.html).

<sup>79</sup> Tore Bjørgo and Jacob Aasland Ravndal, “Extreme-Right Violence and Terrorism: Concepts, Patterns, and Responses,” *International Centre for Counter-Terrorism- The Hague*, September 2019, <https://icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Extreme-Right-Violence-and-Terrorism-Concepts-Patterns-and-Responses.pdf>.

<sup>80</sup> Eric Rosand, “Responding to the Rise in Domestic Terrorism: Don’t Forget Prevention,” *Lawfare*, May 26, 2019, <https://www.lawfareblog.com/responding-rise-domestic-terrorism-dont-forget-prevention>.

radicalization space, typically services government, with its massive bureaucracy and tattered reputation amongst extremist groups, cannot provide.

Most notably, there is room for improved mental health resources in this space. Research conducted by Emily Corner and Paul Gill as well as Jeff Gruenewald et al. has emphasized the link between mental health vulnerabilities and both far-right and lone actor terrorism, the former pointing out that “there is a stronger association between mental illness and lone-actor terrorists than mental illness and group-based terrorists.”<sup>81</sup> Such a dynamic was displayed in a twin attack in Hanau, Germany, as well as through the numerous attacks committed by North American “incels” with previously diagnosed mental health conditions.<sup>82</sup> Nevertheless, once again, Atomwaffen provides an effective case study. To date, the group has been responsible for five murders: Devon Arthurs killed two group members in their apartment in May 2017, Nicholas Giampa murdered his girlfriend’s parents in their home in December 2017, and Sam Woodward stabbed Blaze Bernstein, a gay Jewish student, to death in January 2018. All three suffered from previously diagnosed mental health issues, with Arthurs’ case so severe that he was later found unfit to stand trial.<sup>83</sup> The group’s founder,

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<sup>81</sup> See Emily Corner and Paul Gill, “A False Dichotomy? Mental Illness and Lone-Actor Terrorism,” *Law and Human Behavior* 39, no. 1 (2015): 30, <https://psycnet.apa.org/fulltext/2014-33751-001.pdf>, and Jeff Gruenewald, Steven Chermak, and Joshua Freilich, “Distinguishing ‘Loner’ Attacks from Other Domestic Extremist Violence,” *Criminology & Public Policy* 12, no. 1 (2013): 65-91, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/1745-9133.12008>.

<sup>82</sup> See Tim Hume, “Don’t Blame Germany’s Far Right for the Hanau Shooting, Says Germany’s Far Right,” *Vice*, February 21, 2020, [https://www.vice.com/en\\_us/article/y3m5zk/dont-blame-germanys-far-right-for-the-hanau-shooting-says-germanys-far-right](https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/y3m5zk/dont-blame-germanys-far-right-for-the-hanau-shooting-says-germanys-far-right), and Bruce Hoffman, Jacob Ware, and Ezra Shapiro, “Assessing the Threat of Incel Violence,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 43, no. 7 (2020): 565-587, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1057610X.2020.1751459?journalCode=uter20>.

<sup>83</sup> Several doctors testified that Arthurs suffers from both autism and schizophrenia. According to his family, Giampa suffers from autism and depression. According to his lawyer, Sam Woodward suffers from Asperger’s syndrome. See Dan Sullivan, “Experts: One-time neo-Nazi charged in double murder has autism, schizophrenia,” *Tampa Bay Times*, December 19, 2019, <https://www.tampabay.com/news/crime/2019/12/19/experts-one-time-neo-nazi-charged-in-double-murder-has-autism-schizophrenia/>; Justin Jouvenal, “Va. teen accused of killing girlfriend’s parents to be tried as an adult,” *Washington Post*, September 24, 2019, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/public-safety/va-teen-accused-of-killing-girlfriends-parents-to-be-tried-as-an-adult/2019/09/24/3e628fae-af13-11e9-a0c9-6d2d7818f3da\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/public-safety/va-teen-accused-of-killing-girlfriends-parents-to-be-tried-as-an-adult/2019/09/24/3e628fae-af13-11e9-a0c9-6d2d7818f3da_story.html); Luke Money, “Newport man accused of murdering Blaze Bernstein denies hate crime,” *Daily Pilot*, August 22, 2018, <https://www.latimes.com/socal/daily-pilot/news/tn-dpt-me-woodward-hearing-20180822-story.html>.

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Brandon Russell, is also on the autism spectrum.<sup>84</sup> Numbers provided by the FBI also support the contention that mental health issues can play a disproportionate role in terrorist violence. In an assessment of 52 “lone offender” attacks between 1972 and 2015, the Bureau’s National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime concluded that 25% of the attackers “were formally diagnosed with one or more psychiatric disorders at some point before their attack,” while a further 13% “were diagnosed with one or more psychiatric disorders *after* their attack, upon evaluation by one or multiple mental health professionals.”<sup>85</sup>

Rosand lists greater mental health resources as a desperately-needed pillar of any future counter-far-right violent extremism strategy, pleading for “the adoption of a public health (as opposed to a law-enforcement-driven) approach to preventing extremist violence, which offers opportunities for multipurpose programming, avoiding stigma, and leveraging existing public health resources, including mental health professionals, social workers or teachers.”<sup>86</sup> His suggestion is corroborated by the findings presented by Corner and Gill. “The empirical evidence suggests mental health professionals may have a role in preventing lone-actor terrorist attacks,” they argue. “If mental health professionals were aware of these findings then screening processes can be carried out by security agencies on patients that present similar antecedents and behaviors in medical evaluations.”<sup>87</sup> Work to implement a public health approach to counterterrorism is already being undertaken by several nongovernmental organizations, including Parents for Peace, an NGO consciously emphasizing similarities in radicalization pathways across ideologies.<sup>88</sup> Their efforts, and other similar programs, should receive greater resources—both financial and in expertise—coordination, and encouragement and publicity from federal and local government. If young men and women online need help, it should be easily accessible.

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<sup>84</sup> “Florida Neo-Nazi leader gets 5 years for having explosive material.”

<sup>85</sup> National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime, “Lone Offender: A Study of Lone Offender Terrorism in the United States,” *Federal Bureau of Investigation*, November 2019, <https://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/lone-offender-terrorism-report-111319.pdf/view>.

<sup>86</sup> Rosand, “Responding to the Rise in Domestic Terrorism: Don’t Forget Prevention.”

<sup>87</sup> Corner and Gill, “A False Dichotomy?” 32.

<sup>88</sup> Parents for Peace, “About us,” <https://www.parents4peace.org/about/>.

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Efforts should also be made to diversify funding and grants provided to nongovernmental organizations, as well as the sources of such funding. When grants are provided primarily through the Department of Homeland Security, countering violent extremism is necessarily securitized. Consideration should be given to moving government funding sources into other agencies—perhaps the Department of Education, Department of Health and Human Services, or Department of Veterans Affairs, for instance.<sup>89</sup> Government should also work to cajole other actors into the fight—businesses, philanthropists, and tech companies, for instance, each of which have the funds and expertise needed to provide scaling for effective CVE programs.<sup>90</sup>

Finally, CVE strategies should work to expand and formalize exit paths for former extremists looking to leave lives of racism and hatred, efforts which have often been overlooked in the history of counterterrorism.<sup>91</sup> As Tore Bjørgo and John Horgan write in the preface of their essential *Leaving Terrorism Behind*, “counter-terrorism policies in general have not made systematic efforts to exploit and reinforce these natural tendencies for individual terrorists to quit and terrorist movements to disintegrate.”<sup>92</sup> Programs in Norway

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<sup>89</sup> For more, see Eric Rosand and Stevan Weine, “To Prevent Extremist Violence in the United States, Think Beyond the Homeland Security Box,” *Lawfare*, September 6, 2020, <https://www.lawfareblog.com/prevent-extremist-violence-united-states-think-beyond-homeland-security-box>.

<sup>90</sup> Pandith, *How We Win*, 313-348.

<sup>91</sup> Research on “interventions” against far-right extremists is still in its infancy, particularly concerning the United States. An overview of possible best practices is provided by Jacob Davey, Henry Tuck, and Amarnath Amarasingam, “An imprecise science: Assessing interventions for the prevention, disengagement and de-radicalisation of left and right-wing extremists,” *Institute for Strategic Dialogue*, 2019, <https://www.isdglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/An-imprecise-science.pdf>. An earlier literature review is available at Steven Windisch, Pete Simi, Gina Scott Ligon, and Hillary McNeel, “Disengagement from ideologically-based and violent organizations: A systematic review of the literature,” *Journal for Deradicalization* 9 (Winter 2016/17): 4, <http://journals.sfu.ca/jd/index.php/jd/article/view/72>.

<sup>92</sup> Tore Bjørgo and John Horgan (eds.), *Leaving Terrorism Behind: Individual and Collective Disengagement* (New York: Routledge, 2008).

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and Sweden have shown promising signs which could be scaled up elsewhere.<sup>93</sup> Programming in Australia<sup>94</sup> and Canada<sup>95</sup> has also shown potential.

The prospect of deploying so-called “formers” in the deradicalization space is another promising and powerful reason to pursue smoother exit paths.<sup>96</sup> The potential of such pathways is illustrated in the story told by Chris Buckley, a U.S. Army veteran and former Ku Klux Klan leader who left the movement. His deradicalization was aided by Arno Michaelis, a former white supremacist who “runs an informal underground railroad for racists who want out.”<sup>97</sup> Buckley and Michaelis now collaborate in their work running interventions for Parents for Peace. The story has been repeated elsewhere: the Institute for Strategic Dialogue, based in London, for example runs the Against Violent Extremism network, a collaboration of former extremists which claims to have made over 2,500 “connections.”<sup>98</sup>

Of course, standards will need to be high, with all programs rigorously assessed and any candidates thoroughly vetted. As Daniel Koehler writes, “as with any other field working with potentially high-risk clientele, ill-designed programs with a lack of evaluations and quality oversight might even increase the risk.”<sup>99</sup> Efforts should be undertaken to professionalize the CVE industry, by encouraging—and perhaps even mandating—training

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<sup>93</sup> See Casie Elizabeth Daugherty, “Deradicalization and Disengagement: Exit Programs in Norway,” *Journal for Deradicalization* 21 (Winter 2019/20), <http://journals.sfu.ca/jd/index.php/jd/article/view/287>; and Christer Mattsson and Thomas Johansson, “Leaving Hate Behind – Neo-Nazis, Significant Others and Disengagement,” *Journal for Deradicalization* 18 (Spring 2019), <https://journals.sfu.ca/jd/index.php/jd/article/view/193/147>.

<sup>94</sup> Stevie Voogt, “Countering far-right recruitment online: CAPE’s practitioner experience,” *Journal of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism* 12, no. 1 (2017): 34-46, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/18335330.2016.1215510?needAccess=true>.

<sup>95</sup> Stewart Bell, “‘It’s healing’: How former extremists are working together to undermine the far right,” *Global News*, November 3, 2019, <https://globalnews.ca/news/6098551/stopping-extremists-counter-propaganda/>.

<sup>96</sup> For an account of what former right-wing extremists themselves believe is necessary, see Ryan Scrivens, Vivek Venkatesh, Maxime Bérubé, and Tiana Gaudette. “Combating Violent Extremism: Voices of Former Right-Wing Extremists,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* (2019), <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1057610X.2019.1686856?journalCode=uter20>.

<sup>97</sup> Steve Hendrix, “In the Army and the Klan, he hated Muslims. Now one was coming to Chris Buckley’s home,” *Washington Post*, June 5, 2018, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/local/wp/2018/06/05/feature/in-the-army-and-the-klan-he-hated-muslims-now-one-was-coming-to-his-home/>.

<sup>98</sup> “Against Violent Extremism,” <http://www.againstviolentextremism.org/>, accessed April 27, 2020.

<sup>99</sup> Daniel Koehler, “Violence and Terrorism from the Far-Right: Policy Options to Counter an Elusive Threat,” *International Centre for Counter-Terrorism*, February 2019, 13, <https://icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Koehler-Violence-and-Terrorism-from-the-Far-Right-February-2019.pdf>.

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and education programs for those involved in counter- or deradicalization initiatives. Correcting CVE shortfalls requires not just greater effort, but also greater expertise. Some scholars have even suggested the establishment of dedicated university-level courses (and accompanying internships and also fieldwork) to provide would-be practitioners the skills and years of training needed to learn the necessary tools and experiences for effective deradicalization.<sup>100</sup> Finally, programming will also need to run through NGOs—any perceived government attempt to deradicalize individuals on the extreme right will likely be met with a backlash. Government’s role, instead, is as a facilitator. As Pandith writes, “by acting to empower other actors rather than to monopolize the use of power, government can tackle global issues, giving rise to an almost limitless array of specific programs and interventions.”<sup>101</sup>

Formers are also only one part of the puzzle, and more research is needed to understand how and why extremists leave the movement and the intervention efforts to which they will likely positively respond. As a team of scholars noted in one account of an American who left the far right, “disengagement is a complex and multi-faceted process as well as a dynamic one influenced by not only the satisfaction one derives from involvement, but the sunk costs incurred and alternatives available at any given point in time.”<sup>102</sup> There is also much research to be done on the extent to which formers can contribute to prevention and deradicalization, as well as how to leverage their unique perspective.<sup>103</sup>

Most critically, in the short-term, the U.S. government needs to step up funding and grants for CVE organizations tackling the far-right, funding that has fallen short over the past

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<sup>100</sup> Daniel Koehler and Verena Fiebig, “Knowing What to Do: Academic and Practitioner Understanding of How to Counter Violent Radicalization,” *Perspectives on Terrorism* 13, no. 3 (June 2019), <https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/binaries/content/assets/customsites/perspectives-on-terrorism/2019/issue-3/04--koehler-and-fiebig.pdf>.

<sup>101</sup> Pandith, *How We Win*, 396.

<sup>102</sup> John Horgan, Mary Beth Altier, Neil Shortland, and Max Taylor, “Walking away: the disengagement and deradicalization of a violent right-wing extremist,” *Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression* 9, no. 2 (2017): 74, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/19434472.2016.1156722>.

<sup>103</sup> Maria Walsh and Antje Gansewig, “A former right-wing extremist in school-based prevention work: Research findings from Germany,” *Journal for Deradicalization* 21 (Winter 2019/20), <https://journals.sfu.ca/jd/index.php/jd/article/view/275/183>.



two administrations.<sup>104</sup> (The Trump administration changed little from Obama’s policies, although it did at one point suggest renaming “countering violent extremism” to “countering Islamic extremism.”<sup>105</sup>) Of course, there are genuine critiques levied against countering violent extremism programs. As one recent article in the academic journal *Terrorism and Political Violence* warned, “most CVE studies are theory driven and policy recommendations are mostly based on theoretical frameworks or conceptual models, rather than empirical evidence.”<sup>106</sup> Another take noted that “CVE programs fail because they focus on suppressing ideas, rather than reducing violence.”<sup>107</sup> Empirical evidence may indeed be lacking, but that is largely because empirical evidence of non-radicalization is almost impossible to produce—it is not possible to prove that somebody who might have radicalized without CVE programming did not. On the other hand, empirical evidence does continue to prove that the far-right poses by far America’s greatest terrorism threat, and that more traditional counterterrorism measures are not proving effective against homegrown, domestic terrorism.<sup>108</sup> In September, CVE organization Life After Hate received a \$750,000 grant from the Department of Homeland Security, to support its work in interventions.<sup>109</sup> More such grants must follow (albeit to and from more varied sources and organizations).

This is all especially critical given the recent fracturing of several groups, including Atomwaffen. As a team of researchers from George Washington University’s Program on

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<sup>104</sup> Seamus Hughes and Haroro J. Ingram, “Trump’s Domestic Countering Violent Extremism Policies Look a Lot Like Obama’s,” *Lawfare*, March 10, 2019, <https://www.lawfareblog.com/trumps-domestic-countering-violent-extremism-policies-look-lot-obamas>.

<sup>105</sup> Julia Edwards Ainsley, Dustin Volz, and Kristina Cooke, “Exclusive: Trump to focus counter-extremism program solely on Islam – sources,” *Reuters*, February 1, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-extremists-program-exclusiv-idUSKBN15G5VO>

<sup>106</sup> Amy-Jane Gielen, “Countering Violent Extremism: A Realist Review for Assessing What Works, for Whom, in What Circumstances, and How?” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 31, no. 6 (2019): 1149-1167, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/09546553.2017.1313736?needAccess=true>.

<sup>107</sup> “Why Countering Violent Extremism Programs Are Bad Policy,” *Brennan Center for Justice*, September 9, 2019, <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/why-countering-violent-extremism-programs-are-bad-policy>.

<sup>108</sup> “Murder and Extremism in the United States in 2019,” *Anti-Defamation League*, <https://www.adl.org/murder-and-extremism-2019>.

<sup>109</sup> “Life After Hate awarded \$750,000 to disrupt domestic terrorism,” *Life After Hate*, September 16, 2020, <https://www.lifeafterhate.org/blog/2020/9/16/life-after-hate-awarded-750000-to-disrupt-domestic-terrorism>.

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Extremism and the Anti-Defamation League noted in an April 2020 report, “we need immediate and uncontroversial investments in prevention to change the trajectory of extremism in the United States as soon as possible.”<sup>110</sup> Of course, such investments were unlikely under a President who regularly refused to condemn far-right violence, and often himself repeated some of the very conspiracy theories that sustain the country’s extremist underbelly.<sup>111</sup> CVE programming might have a brighter future under the Joseph R. Biden administration.

## Conclusion

A number of significant incidents over the past few months have highlighted once again the chilling threat right-wing extremism poses to the United States. Summer protests over the killing of unarmed Black men in the United States revealed an active and loud far-right underground, including the “boogaloo,” a largely right-wing anti-government movement. In June, a security officer and sheriff’s deputy were killed in twin shootings perpetrated by a boogaloo adherent and Air Force officer.<sup>112</sup> In August, two left-wing activists were killed by a 17-year-old counter-protestor who had traveled to Kenosha, Wisconsin, allegedly to protect businesses from looters.<sup>113</sup> In the build-up to the 2020 U.S. election, threats escalated, the most serious of which involved a 14-man cell plotting to kidnap Michigan governor Gretchen

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<sup>110</sup> Jon Lewis, Seamus Hughes, Oren Segal, and Ryan Greer, “White Supremacist Terror: Modernizing Our Approach to Today’s Threat,” *GWU Program on Extremism*, April 2020, 34, <https://extremism.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs2191/f/White%20Supremacist%20Terror%20final.pdf>.

<sup>111</sup> See, for example, Stephen Tankel, “Riding the Tiger: How Trump Enables Right-Wing Extremism,” *War on the Rocks*, November 5, 2018, <https://warontherocks.com/2018/11/riding-the-tiger-how-trump-enables-right-wing-extremism/>; Daniel Byman, “Trump’s Rhetoric Is Raising the Risk of Right-Wing Terrorism,” *Slate*, January 21, 2019, <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2019/01/right-wing-terrorism-trump-rhetoric.html>; and David Frum, “A President Who Condone Political Violence,” *Atlantic*, October 26, 2018, <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2018/10/trump-bombs-florida-tweets/574108/>.

<sup>112</sup> Dan Noyes, “What pushed accused cop killer Steven Carrillo over the edge? Former friend weighs in,” *ABC 7 News*, July 14, 2020, <https://abc7news.com/steven-carrillo-santa-cruz-boogaloo-pat-underwood-oakland-federal-officer/6317728/>.

<sup>113</sup> Mark Guarino, Mark Berman, Jaclyn Peiser, and Griff Witte, “17-year-old charged with homicide after shooting during Kenosha protests, authorities say,” *Washington Post*, August 26, 2020, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2020/08/26/jacob-blake-kenosha-police-protests/>.

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Whitmer, as well as Virginia governor Ralph Northam. The conspiracy targeted Democratic governors pushing strict Covid-19 measures, both from states named in tweets sent by President Trump urging followers to “liberate” Democratic states.<sup>114</sup> Finally, a thwarted QAnon-related plot to target a vote-counting facility in Philadelphia in the days after the election provided an important and timely reminder of the new threats that may emerge during the incoming Biden administration.<sup>115</sup> But, despite the notable absence of groups like Atomwaffen, the National Socialist Order, and the Base from the recent publicly-reported plots, the countermeasures outlined above are still essential to long-term efforts to restore peace and security to the American homeland. As mentioned, many of the themes discussed, including the preponderance of youth, online radicalization, and short prison sentences, transcend the so-called “accelerationist” networks—they dominate the entire far-right terrorist threat, and their dismissal will require bolder, braver measures.

In testimony delivered to the United States House Committee on Homeland Security in October 2019, FBI Director Christopher Wray said “you’re never going to find a law enforcement or intelligence professional who wouldn’t like more tools.”<sup>116</sup> The U.S. government, now, is beginning to answer his call. The proposed FTO designation against the Atomwaffen Division, though the group disbanded before it came to fruition, was an intriguing first step, quickly followed up by the SDGT designation against RIM. Such a charge being levied against other groups, including the Base, would make it much more challenging for those groups to operate than in the relative freedom they currently enjoy. Leading extremism scholar J.M. Berger once described America under the Trump administration as “the most hospitable political environment [white nationalists] have seen in

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<sup>114</sup> Tresa Baldas, Paul Egan, and Bill Atkinson, “FBI says Virginia Gov. Northam was also targeted in plot to kidnap Michigan Gov. Whitmer,” *USA Today*, October 13, 2020, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2020/10/13/fbi-says-virginia-governor-in-whitmer-kidnapping-plot/5978635002/>.

<sup>115</sup> David Gilbert, “Two Men Linked to QAnon Arrested For Plot to Attack Philly Vote Counting Site,” *Vice*, November 6, 2020, <https://www.vice.com/en/article/n7vbbg/pennsylvania-convention-center-arrests>.

<sup>116</sup> Bertrand, Toosi, and Lippman, “State pushes to list white supremacist group as terrorist org.”

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decades.”<sup>117</sup> With new legal tools to tackle far-right terrorism in development, as well as a new administration coming into power, that might be about to change.

However, as the seemingly never-ending fight against Salafi-jihadist extremism has displayed ad nauseam, we cannot arrest our way out of the extremism problem. That is especially true in the case of far-right extremism, elements of which have surprisingly broad support in the United States, as the previously discussed polling numbers highlight. The FBI and its partner agencies at federal and local levels should not have to decide between two extreme choices, whether to pre-emptively arrest an individual believed to be mobilizing to violence or allow them to continue walking our streets, possibly radicalizing new individuals and inspiring others to violence.<sup>118</sup> CVE offers a middle ground. Sadly, it requires a funding and time commitment that neither Republican nor Democratic administrations seem willing to provide.<sup>119</sup>

The call for more public responsibility in preventing terrorism, particularly among lone actors, has been recently echoed by Wray, in the November 2019 Bureau report on lone offender terrorism. “But prevention is more than just a law enforcement effort,” Wray argued.

“Law enforcement is working diligently to improve its collaboration and coordination with other government entities, such as community mental health, social services, probation and parole, and educators, as well as private sector partners and stakeholders, to share information and ensure all entities are working together to help manage and mitigate threats. All citizens have a critical role in prevention.”<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> J.M. Berger, “The Strategy of Violent White Supremacy Is Evolving,” *Atlantic*, August 7, 2019, <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2019/08/the-new-strategy-of-violent-white-supremacy/595648/>.

<sup>118</sup> Rosand, “Responding to the Rise in Domestic Terrorism: Don’t Forget Prevention.”

<sup>119</sup> Hughes and Ingram, “Trump’s Domestic Countering Violent Extremism Policies Look a Lot Like Obama’s.”

<sup>120</sup> National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime, “Lone Offender: A Study of Lone Offender Terrorism in the United States.”

His call-to-action is an important step in the right direction. The FBI and its partner agencies seem to have won their battle against the Atomwaffen Division, at least for now. But there are more fights ahead—including with the new National Socialist Order. And while they need all the legal tools they can get, advances in methods to tackle imminent far-right threats should not mask the need to develop longer-term strategies to address hate and extremism at home and abroad.

Policing and intelligence have been efficient in cutting off heads of the far-right extremist hydra, but have not made any advancement in defeating the beast itself. A victory will require something bolder, braver, and longer-term. It is time to get serious about countering violent extremism programming in the United States.

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