



# **Department of Justice**

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**STATEMENT OF**

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FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION**

**BEFORE THE**

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE CONSTITUTION, CIVIL RIGHTS, AND HUMAN RIGHTS  
COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY  
UNITED STATES SENATE**

**AT A HEARING CONCERNING**

**THE DOMESTIC TERRORISM THREAT**

**PRESENTED**

**SEPTEMBER 19, 2012**

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Michael A. Clancy  
Deputy Assistant Director  
Counterterrorism Division  
Federal Bureau of Investigation**

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Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights, and Human Rights  
Committee on the Judiciary  
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The Domestic Terrorism Threat**

**Presented  
September 19, 2012**

Good Morning, Chairman Durbin, Ranking Member Graham, and members of the Subcommittee. It is my honor to come before you to represent the Counterterrorism Division of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (“FBI”) to discuss one of the highest priorities of the Bureau: the threat posed by domestic extremists.

On September 10, 2012, the FBI disseminated its National Terrorism Assessment on Domestic Terrorism. In the formulation of this assessment, the overall threat ranking considers intent, capability, and posture in its determination of the threat domestic extremist movements pose in the United States. The FBI assesses that economic and political events – foremost among them the coming Presidential election – are likely to provoke domestic extremists into a more active state, although this is unlikely to drive an increase in large-scale violence. Smaller, localized acts of violence committed by domestic extremists, however, cannot be dismissed. The FBI further assesses that domestic extremist movements pose a medium-to-

low terrorism threat. Specific political and economic events scheduled in 2012 create the potential for greater volatility within domestic extremism than existed in the previous year.

In recent months, the FBI has seen numerous examples of domestic terrorism and violence committed by lone offenders or small cells. For example, this year the FBI proactively dismantled an Anarchist Extremist cell comprised of five men who planned to blow up a bridge in Cleveland, Ohio. Four members of the cell have pleaded guilty and the fifth member is going to trial. In November 2011, four members of a militia in Georgia were arrested for planning to acquire silencers and explosives to use against various U.S. Government targets in Atlanta, Georgia. To date, two of the subjects have been sentenced to 60 months incarceration and three years of supervised release for conspiracy to possess an unregistered destructive device. This summer, we have witnessed multiple, high-profile lone-offender shootings. The FBI investigated each of these incidents in partnership with Federal, State, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies, as potential acts of domestic terrorism. Three of these shootings – at a movie theater in Aurora, Colorado, at a Sikh Temple in Wisconsin, and at the Family Research Council headquarters in Washington, D.C. – resulted in the combined deaths of 18 individuals and the wounding of over 50.

Significant political events and scheduled international and economic meetings, combined with ongoing economic concerns, create the potential for greater volatility within domestic extremism in 2012 than existed in the previous year. While all domestic extremist

movements pose a threat, the following potential outcomes are especially relevant in the current environment:

- Election-related events heighten the opportunity for anarchist extremism in 2012.
- The 2012 election process may revitalize recruitment efforts for the white supremacist extremist movement.
- Militia extremists are expected to continue targeting law enforcement and government officials in response to any recently enacted legislation that is perceived as infringing on their constitutional rights.
- White-collar crime by those in the extremist “sovereign citizen” antigovernment movement who exploit the housing crisis could continue if the housing sector of the economy remains weak in 2012.
- Environmental extremists may engage in criminal activity – including the destruction of property – if they perceive that legislative efforts to protect and preserve the environment are ineffective or unsuccessful.

Over the next year, domestic extremists are likely to maintain the intent and capability to pose a persistent threat involving smaller scale bombings, assaults, firearms and explosives violations, arson, white-collar crime, threats, and other violations of Federal law. The FBI will continue to enhance its crucial partnerships with Federal, State, local, tribal, and foreign law enforcement agencies, other members of the U.S. Intelligence Community, and the private sector to combat the unrelenting threat of domestic terrorism.

In every domestic terrorism investigation – and indeed, in every investigation – we in the Bureau strive to balance the need to keep the American public safe with the need to protect

Constitutional rights, including the First Amendment rights to free speech and freedom of assembly. Intelligence and technology are key tools we use to stay ahead of those who would do us harm. Yet, as we evolve and update our investigative techniques and our use of technology to keep pace with today's complex threat environment, we must always act within the confines of the rule of law and the safeguards guaranteed by the Constitution. It is not enough to stop the terrorists; we must always do so while maintaining civil rights and civil liberties. Following the rule of law and upholding civil rights and civil liberties – these are not our burdens. These are what make all of us safer and stronger. In the end, we in the FBI will be judged not only by our ability to keep Americans safe from terrorism, but also by whether we safeguard the civil rights and civil liberties for which we are fighting and maintain the trust of the American people.

Thank you for the opportunity to address the Subcommittee on the FBI's efforts to counter domestic terrorism. I will gladly address any questions you may have.