



Cops Find Anti- Government Americans are a Bigger Threat than Islamists

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Two years ago, researchers at Duke University, drawing on a survey they conducted with police departments around the country through the Police Executive Research Forum, published a [study](#) on police perceptions of the domestic terrorist threat. It's worth recounting the key findings:

Law enforcement agencies in the United States consider anti-government violent extremists, not radicalized Muslims, to be the most severe threat of political violence that they face.

They perceive violent extremism to be a much more severe threat nationally than the threat of violent extremism in their own jurisdictions.

And a large majority of law enforcement agencies rank the threat of all forms of violent extremism in their own jurisdictions as moderate or lower (3 or less on a 1-5 scale).

The study looks at post-9/11 incidents and comes to conclusions comparable to a GAO [study](#) on the topic, commissioned by the bipartisan leadership of the Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee, earlier this year. Nearly a decade ago, a then-controversial DHS [report](#) on domestic extremism highlighted the potential danger for violent acts by white supremacist or neo-Nazi groups.

My colleague Alex Nowrasteh has a very interesting and informative [piece](#) out today that goes into some depth about the relative threat from terrorists compared to other forms of violence. One point I would make is that the 9/11 attacks represent an anomaly in the overall picture because of the magnitude of the intelligence failure involved. As I've written previously, that foreign terrorist attack on America was entirely [preventable](#). That's not to suggest that Salafist terrorism does not pose a domestic threat; clearly it does. But the on-the-ground daily reality—as the studies cited above show—is that in post-9/11 America, the threat from white supremacists, “sovereign citizens,” and those professing similar views and *acting* on them is at least as great a threat as Salafist-inspired killers.

In the wake of the Charlottesville tragedy, the phrase “anti-government group” is likely to get tossed around rather carelessly, both in the media and by some in the advocacy community. Calling for a smaller federal government whose powers—especially surveillance powers—are reduced and properly controlled does not make one an “extremist.” Spewing racial hatred and

committing acts of murder is the very manifestation of violent extremism, something all of us should condemn and oppose.

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