(U) White Supremacist Recruitment of Military Personnel since 9/11

7 July 2008
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(U) Scope Note

(U//FOUO) This intelligence assessment addresses the Terrorism (TERR) topic of the National Intelligence Priorities Framework and satisfies intelligence requirements contained in the Domestic Terrorism Standing Intelligence Requirements Set DT-I.A.3; II.B.1, II.B.3, II.B.5; III.A.2; III.D.1; and IV.1; FBI CT Production Topic 11, “Radicalization and Recruiting,” and Topic 13, “Weapons and Capabilities.” The assessment is based upon FBI reporting supplemented by open sources and includes information through 6 May 2008.

(U//FOUO) This assessment examines why white supremacist extremist groups have attempted to increase their recruitment of current and former US military personnel, what success their recruitment efforts have enjoyed, and what impact such recruitment has had on the white supremacist extremist movement. The identification of current and former members of the US Armed Forces (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard) in the extremist movement draws exclusively from FBI case files from October 2001 to May 2008. It is based on the assumption that military veterans involved in white supremacist extremism may exploit their accesses to restricted areas and intelligence or apply specialized training in weapons, tactics, and organizational skills to benefit the extremist movement.
(U) Key Judgments

Except where noted, the confidence levels for the following judgments are considered **moderate**.¹

- **(U//FOUO) High confidence**: Military experience is found throughout the white supremacist extremist movement as the result of recruitment campaigns by extremist groups and self-recruitment by veterans sympathetic to white supremacist causes. Extremist leaders seek to recruit members with military experience in order to exploit their discipline, knowledge of firearms, explosives, and tactical skills and access to weapons and intelligence.

- **(U//FOUO) Although individuals with military backgrounds constitute a small percentage of white supremacist extremists, they frequently occupy leadership roles within extremist groups and their involvement has the potential to reinvigorate an extremist movement suffering from loss of leadership and in-fighting during the post-9/11 period.**

- **(U//FOUO) White supremacist extremists hope to revitalize the white supremacist movement by exploiting antigovernment sentiment among opponents of the overseas conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. Although some veterans of these conflicts have joined the extremist movement, they have not done so in numbers sufficient to stem declines among major national extremist organizations, nor has their participation resulted in a more violent extremist movement.**

- **(U//FOUO) Looking ahead, current and former military personnel belonging to white supremacist extremist organizations who experience frustration at the inability of these organizations to achieve their goals may choose to found new, more operationally minded and operationally capable groups. The military training veterans bring to the movement and their potential to pass this training on to others can increase the ability of lone offenders to carry out violence from the movement’s fringes.**

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¹ (U) Confidence levels refer to the quality of intelligence used to support analytic judgments and are defined as:
(U) **High confidence** generally indicates judgments are based on high-quality information or the nature of the issue makes it possible to render a solid judgment. A “high confidence” judgment is not a fact or a certainty, however, and such judgments still carry risk of being wrong.
(U) **Moderate confidence** generally means information is credibly sourced and plausible but not of sufficient quality or corroborated sufficiently to warrant a higher level of confidence.
(U) **Low confidence** generally means the information’s credibility or plausibility is questionable, the information is too fragmented or poorly corroborated to make solid analytic inferences, or significant concerns or problems exist with respect to the sources.
Recruitment of Military Experience into White Supremacist Extremism

Military experience—ranging from failure at basic training to success in special operations forces—is found throughout the white supremacist extremist movement. FBI reporting indicates extremist leaders have historically favored recruiting active and former military personnel for their knowledge of firearms, explosives, and tactical skills and their access to weapons and intelligence in preparation for an anticipated war against the federal government, Jews, and people of color. FBI cases also document instances of active duty military personnel having volunteered their professional resources to white supremacist causes.

Some veterans of the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan have joined the extremist movement. However, they have not done so in numbers sufficient to stem declines among major national extremist organizations caused by the deaths or incarcerations of significant leaders and disruptive infighting. Nor has their participation resulted in a demonstrably more violent extremist movement. Post-9/11 activities by current or former military personnel involved in the extremist movement span the range of activities engaged in by their extremist compatriots who lack military experience, and include weapons violations, physical violence, paramilitary training, intelligence collection, drug violations, fraud, threats, and arson.

Warfare and White Supremacist Extremism

Warfare against those opposing white supremacy or the creation of a separate white homeland is commonly anticipated within the white supremacist extremist movement and motivates its leaders to recruit those with military experience. The beliefs inspiring this anticipation of racial warfare include the following:

- Several white supremacist extremist groups, including the Church of Jesus Christ Christian/Aryan Nations, adhere to Christian Identity teachings, which anticipate the end of the world and the Second Coming of Christ based upon idiosyncratic interpretations of the Bible. One interpretation anticipates God will use the chosen race (white Christians) as a divine weapon against the forces of evil (nonwhites and Jews) in a purifying race war preliminary to Christ’s establishing God’s kingdom on earth.

- The Creativity Movement espouses the concept of RAHOWA (“Racial Holy War”) for survival of the white race. Creativity literature claims RAHOWA is the inevitable and only solution for sustaining the white race—described as the supreme act of creation—against non-white peoples.

- Neo-Nazi groups idolize Adolf Hitler and Nazi-era Germany. Of these groups, the National Socialist Movement patterns its organizational structure after the German Army of the Hitler era in anticipation of war against the US Government, people of color, and Jews. Among skinhead groups, Blood and Honour, USA, advocates establishing white superiority through war against those opposed to National Socialism.

- Odinism, as interpreted within the extremist movement, perceives a threatened destruction by Jewish conspiracy of pre-Christian Northern European cultures and ethnicities. Odinism has a broad following among racist skinheads and has open sympathies with National Socialism, which historically embraced Wotanism as an aspect of Aryan culture during the German Nazi era. Odinists believe evil temporarily dominates the current age, during which the faithful prepare for the nihilistic battle of Ragnarok (“doom of the gods”) preceding a purified new world.
(U) Presence and Activity of Those with Military Experience in the Extremist Movement

(U/FOUO) A review of FBI white supremacist extremist cases from October 2001 to May 2008 identified 203 individuals with confirmed or claimed military service active in the extremist movement at some time during the reporting period. This number is minuscule in comparison with the projected US veteran population of 23,816,000 as of 2 May 2008, or the 1,416,037 active duty military personnel as of 30 April 2008. It is also a small percentage of an estimated US white supremacist extremist population, which, based on FBI investigations, currently numbers in the low thousands. However, the prestige which the extremist movement bestows upon members with military experience grants them the potential for influence beyond their numbers. Most extremist groups have some members with military experience, and those with military experience often hold positions of authority within the groups to which they belong.

Distribution of Military Experience in Post-9/11 White Supremacist Extremism

Figure 1 illustrates the distribution of the 203 individuals among major categories of white supremacist extremism. Although the count of 203 includes persons with unverified military backgrounds—some of whom may have inflated their resumes with fictional military

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(U) Initial review of FBI files identified approximately 248 individuals. After eliminating individuals with incomplete names, unspecified military backgrounds, or unspecified activity or membership in the white supremacist extremist movement, this number reduced to 203 individuals.
experience to impress others within the movement—this number is helpful in identifying those groups which most attract and value military experience. Skinhead groups and the extremist organizations National Alliance (NA) and National Socialist Movement (NSM) account for 72 percent (147 of 203) of the total count. The NA’s recruiting success primarily occurred earlier in the reporting period (2001-2005), with FBI cases documenting only 41 percent (24 of 58) of its personnel with military backgrounds actively involved in the group in 2006 or later. In contrast, the NSM sustained its attraction through the closing years of the reporting period, with 93 percent (41 of 44) of its current and former military personnel showing documented activity in 2006 or later.

(U) National Alliance

(U//LES) The NA’s early success resulted in large part from the strategy pursued by its founder, William Luther Pierce (now deceased), who sought to recruit “higher quality” members from academia, law enforcement, and the military. FBI sources indicate Pierce hoped to exploit discontent among what he perceived as a US military demoralized by United Nations oversight and to this end he established a Military Unit led by a former Green Beret sergeant to facilitate contact with current and former military prospects in the late 1990s. The NA’s success in this campaign was reflected in the April 2001 semi-annual NA Leadership Conference, which attracted 84 attendees—the largest in the group’s history. According to reliable and sensitive source reporting, an estimated 10 percent of attendees were active military members and an additional 15 percent had recently been discharged from military service. Despite this initial success, the NA began to decline in numbers and influence largely because of its lack of effective leadership following Pierce’s death in 2002.

(U) National Socialist Movement

(U//FOUO) In contrast to the NA and other white supremacist groups, the NSM—although not immune to factionalism—enjoyed a greater degree of stability during the post-9/11 period and benefited from the membership exoduses of other struggling organizations. This relative stability included a sustained campaign to recruit current and former military personnel overseen by a respected figure in the extremist movement and unverified former Marine, who left leadership roles in the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) and Aryan Nations (AN) to become a Colonel in the NSM and Director of its “Stormtroopers” (the NSM’s security force) from 2002 until his retirement in December 2007. The NSM’s military structure also adds to its recruitment success by offering a familiar organizational context for veterans, including a system of rank that serves as an incentive for joining the group. In addition, NSM literature has outlined the development of a Special Projects Division consisting of “Werewolf Units” intended for special military operations and with a membership favoring those with military backgrounds.

(U//LES) According to sensitive and reliable source reporting in October 2006, the NSM received a number of queries from active duty Army and Marine personnel stationed in Iraq and Afghanistan expressing interest in joining the organization or inquiring about chapters located near domestic US military bases. This report followed—and was consistent with—December 2005 source reporting on the NSM stressing the need to place units close to military bases nationwide in order to recruit military personnel. Whether as a result of group recruitment...
efforts or self-recruitment by active military personnel sympathetic to white supremacist extremist causes, FBI information derived from reliable, multiple sources documents white supremacist extremist activity occurring at some military bases.

- (U/LES) Two Army privates in the 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, received six year prison sentences for attempting to sell stolen government property in mid-2007 to an undercover FBI agent they believed was involved with the white supremacist movement. The property included ballistic vests with plates, a combat helmet, and the controlled substances morphine sulfate and Diazepam.

- (U/LES) In May 2003 the US Army Criminal Investigation Division (CID) advised the FBI of six active duty soldiers at Fort Riley, Kansas, with possible AN affiliations. One of the six, who has unconfirmed service in Iraq, sought to recruit members from within the Army and served as the AN's point-of-contact in Kansas.

- (U/LES) In mid-2000 and leading into the early 2001 assessment period, Army CID and FBI sources of unspecified credibility reported on the recruiting of individuals stationed at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, by an AN Tennessee leader who also sought information about troop deployments, unit sizes, and military missions. The subject also expressed interest in setting up a training camp for instruction in assault, infantry, camouflage, reconnaissance, and building bunkers. Although the FBI assessed the subject successfully recruited soldiers from Ft. Campbell into the AN, his arrest on felony firearms charges in December 2000 and sentencing to two years probation in April 2003 effectively disrupted his leadership and training activities.

(U) Skinhead Groups

(U/LES) Skinheads, who constitute the youngest and most violent elements of the white supremacist extremist movement, also have endeavored to recruit individuals with military backgrounds. The former NA military liaison mentioned above has advocated skinheads join the military long enough to receive basic military skills. Internet postings and sensitive and reliable source reporting indicates other white supremacist leaders have encouraged followers who lack histories of neo-Nazi activity and overt racist insignia such as tattoos to infiltrate the military as "ghost skins," in order to recruit and receive training for the benefit of the extremist movement. Although skinheads typically engage in random acts of violence against targets of opportunity, the presence of veterans in their ranks could, by exposing them to military training, lead to involvement in more strategic acts of violence.

- (U/LES) In November 2007 a collaborative source with good access, some of whose reporting has been corroborated within the past year, reported that the leader of a North Carolina-based skinhead group began recruiting an elite team to engage in "racial holy war." The leader expressed interest in recruiting persons with military backgrounds and considered purchasing property to conduct training in weapons, tactics, interrogation, and survival skills.
In September 2006 a reliable source with direct access reported AN leadership offered to train North Carolina chapter members of Blood and Honour Combat 18—at least two of whom have confirmed military backgrounds—as a “special operations enforcement branch” of the AN.\textsuperscript{xxi} In December 2006, a reliable source with direct access said one Combat 18 leader, a confirmed Army veteran, also expressed interest in providing military-style training to his followers independent of the AN in order to pursue vigilantism.\textsuperscript{xxii} There is no information to indicate these initiatives moved beyond preliminary discussions, and it is likely that subsequent leadership changes in the AN and Combat 18 have reduced the ability to implement them.

According to multiple, overall credible sources, leaders of a national skinhead organization have conducted weapons training and stockpiled weapons and ammunition on private property in central Florida in anticipation of a race war or the collapse of society from an unspecified catastrophic event. Two identified members of this group have unverified service in the Army and Army National Guard.\textsuperscript{xxiv}

(U) Activity by Returning Veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan

White supremacist extremist Web sites tend to view the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan as an opportunity to recruit new members by depicting the war in Iraq in particular as fought in service of Israel, or as a distraction from domestic concerns, such as immigration.\textsuperscript{xxv} Their advocacy for these issues has created an expectation among some extremists that the movement will benefit from an influx of sympathetic Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans.\textsuperscript{xxvi} By exploiting anti-government sentiment among those opposed to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the FBI assesses extremists hope to revitalize a movement suffering from loss of leadership and infighting since 9/11.

Veterans returning from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have not joined the extremist movement in numbers sufficient to stem declines or compensate for the splintering experienced by most major national extremist organizations. According to FBI information, an estimated 19 veterans (approximately 9 percent of the 203) have verified or unverified service in the ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Twelve of these have primary affiliations with the national organizations NSM (7), NA (4), and AN (1), six with skinhead groups, and one with white supremacist criminal gangs. FBI information indicates the activities engaged in by these individuals reflect those by veterans in the extremist movement generally since 9/11.
(U) Violence

(U//LES) The addition of returning veterans has not resulted in a more violent white supremacist extremist movement. While four of the 19 Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans identified by investigations have violent criminal histories involving assault charges or convictions, only one—an Alaska Army National Guardsman and member of a local Alaskan skinhead crew—has a record of white supremacy-related violence, involving a minor role in a 19 February 2006 assault prior to his service in Iraq. Some extremists, however, have advocated adopting tactics used in insurgencies overseas, for which military training and combat experience would be beneficial. xxvi

- (U//FOUO) According to reliable information, an incarcerated former member of Volksfront and the Confederate Hammerskins attempted to submit an article to the NA’s Resistance magazine in December 2006. In the unpublished article, the author, who claims having received counterterrorism training in the Navy, urges Aryans to pursue “a long war of attrition” against the “Zionist” US Government similar to the strategies of insurgents in Iraq and Northern Ireland. This would include “sporadic bombing campaigns” against the public and “executing prominent officials.” xxvii

(U//FOUO) There are no present indications of white supremacist extremists with service in Iraq or Afghanistan seeking to retaliate for adverse overseas experiences by engaging in violence against Islam or those of Middle Eastern ethnicities upon returning to the United States. White supremacists more often interpret the Iraq War as an “American war,” or a “zionist led Iraqi war,” and direct their hostile rhetoric against the perceived “enemy”—the hostile “Zionist Occupational Government” (ZOG)—at home. xxviii This rhetoric would conceivably inspire violence more toward federal government or Jewish targets than toward targets associated with Muslims in general, or those of non-Jewish Middle Eastern ethnicities in particular.

(U) Weapons Violations and Criminal Enterprise

(U//FOUO) Three of the 19 verified or unverified Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans have engaged in military weapons or equipment violations. Two of the three are also implicated in plotting to apply their military training toward criminal enterprise.

- (U//LES) According to reliable and corroborated source reporting, in 2006 the leader of the Celtic Knights—a now defunct Hammerskin splinter group in central Texas—planned to obtain firearms and explosives from an active duty Army soldier based at Fort Hood, Texas, and to use the soldier in attacks against methamphetamine labs in the Austin area. The soldier, who served in Iraq during 2006 and 2007, concurrently held membership in the NA and probationary membership in the Celtic Knights. The soldier is going through proceedings for military discharge. xxix

- (U//FOUO) In November 2005 a federal court convicted a former Army intelligence analyst on a weapons violation for having assisted a convicted felon in purchasing a firearm. Military police at Fort Bragg discovered white supremacist materials and several weapons hidden behind ceiling tiles in the subject’s quarters. The subject was
formerly associated with the NA but founded a Spokane-based skinhead group after leaving the Army—a group for which the subject reportedly advocated pursuing tactical training in firearms, knives, close-quarters fighting, and “house sweeps” for general readiness and possible use in robbing drug houses.

(U) Pursuit of Leadership Roles

(U//FOUO) Military experience—often regardless of its length or type—distinguishes one within the extremist movement. While those with military backgrounds constitute a small percentage of white supremacist extremists, FBI investigations indicate they frequently have higher profiles within the movement, including recruitment and leadership roles. These are also the most common activities of the 19 verified or unverified veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan, seven of whom are suspected of having recruited for, or pursued state leadership roles on behalf of, national groups, as the following examples illustrate.

- (U//LES) Investigation by the Montana Joint Terrorism Task Force of January 2006 reporting from the Montana All-Threat Intelligence Center identified an unverified Marine Corps veteran—who claimed to have served in Iraq before being discharged in 2005—having formed an NSM chapter in Butte, Montana, before becoming the group’s state leader. In an open source interview, the subject said he joined the NSM in 2004 while still a Marine because he “came to believe the United States is fighting the war on Israel’s behalf.”

- (U//LES) According to a reliable source, the Fort Riley–based soldier referenced above as the AN’s point-of-contact in Kansas in 2003 left the AN to lead Volksfront and Hammerskin chapters in Kansas in early 2004. Reporting confirmed by other sources indicate he then founded his own skinhead organization later that year. In 2006 multiple sources of unspecified reliability identified this individual having reemerged as the AN’s Kansas State Leader.

- (U//LES) According to corroborated source reporting, a Marine Corps officer communicated with NSM leadership in December 2005 regarding starting an NSM unit in California upon the officer’s return from Iraq and discharge from the Marines. There is no indication the officer has pursued involvement in white supremacist extremism since being discharged in late 2006.

(U) Outlook

(U//FOUO) Although some current and former military personnel have joined the white supremacist extremist movement and engaged in criminal activities on its behalf, they have more often concentrated on recruiting and leadership roles within existing groups. These latter activities have the potential to reinvigorate a movement that has experienced stagnation or decline in recent years due in large part to the deaths or incarcerations of several of its national leaders.
(U//FOUO) Given the leadership ambitions of many of the military veterans within the movement, it is likely that some will choose to form new groups rather than continue to associate with well-established, but ineffective organizations. Although splintering within the extremist movement is common, it tends to produce derivative, short-lived groups that siphon members and resources from their organizations of origin. Indicators of a new group's viability would very likely include charismatic leadership capable of drawing new members from a broader spectrum of the extremist movement and of sustaining their involvement with a well-articulated agenda. New groups led or significantly populated by military veterans could very likely pursue more operationally minded agendas with greater tactical confidence. In addition, the military training veterans bring to the movement and their potential to pass this training on to others can increase the ability of lone offenders to carry out violence from the movement's fringes.

(U) Intelligence Gaps

- (U//FOUO) Which venues and methods are extremist organizations using to recruit members with military experience?

- (U//FOUO) How are extremist organizations using the military experience of their members to advance group objectives?

- (U//FOUO) What specific skill sets (weapons, explosives, computer, communications, etc.) do individual members of domestic terrorist groups with military experience have or have access to?

- (U//FOUO) What specific skill sets (weapons, explosives, computer, communications, and so forth) do recruiters for extremist groups desire of new member prospects with military experience?

- (U//FOUO) Are white supremacist extremists attributing traumas suffered by veterans in Iraq and Afghanistan to Middle Eastern ethnic groups, which could then become targets of violence?

(U) This assessment was prepared by the Domestic Terrorism Analysis Unit of the FBI. Comments and queries may be addressed to the Unit Chief at 202-324-0256.
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(U) Endnotes

2 (U) Veterans Administration, http://www1.va.gov/vetdata/docs/4x6_spring08_sharepoint.pdf (UNCLASSIFIED).
4 (U) Compare the 10,000 to 15,000 figure provided in FBI Intelligence Assessment, State of the Domestic White Nationalist Extremist Movement in the United States, 13 December 2006: 4 (UNCLASSIFIED).
5 (U) See, for example, FBI IIR 4 201 4757 07, 10 August 2007 (UNCLASSIFIED).
6 (U) FBI Case Information (UNCLASSIFIED). (U) FBI Intelligence Assessment, White Supremacist Infiltration of Law Enforcement, 1 7 October 2006: 5 (UNCLASSIFIED).
7 (U) FBI Case Information (UNCLASSIFIED).
8 (U) FBI Case Information (UNCLASSIFIED).
9 (U) See FBI Intelligence Bulletin, “National Alliance Continues to Falter” (18 June 2007) (UNCLASSIFIED).
10 (U) FBI Case Information (UNCLASSIFIED); (U) See USEP 5 in FBI IIR 4 201 4445 07, 25 July 2007 (UNCLASSIFIED).
11 (U) FBI Case Information (UNCLASSIFIED); (U) compare FBI IIR 4 235 0521 08, 6 May 2008 (UNCLASSIFIED).
12 (U) FBI Case Information (UNCLASSIFIED).
13 (U) FBI Case Information (UNCLASSIFIED).
14 (U) FBI Case Information (UNCLASSIFIED).
15 (U) FBI Case Information (UNCLASSIFIED); (U) Associated Press, "Soldiers jailed for selling stolen Army-issue drugs, body armor to undercover agent," 22 June 2007 (UNCLASSIFIED).
16 (U) FBI Case Information (UNCLASSIFIED).
17 (U) FBI Case Information (UNCLASSIFIED).
18 (U) FBI case Information (UNCLASSIFIED).
19 (U) FBI Case Information (UNCLASSIFIED).
20 (U) FBI Case Information (UNCLASSIFIED).
22 (U) FBI IIR 4 201 1746 08 (UNCLASSIFIED); (U) FBI IIR 4 201 1648 08 (UNCLASSIFIED).
23 (U) FBI Case Information (UNCLASSIFIED).
24 (U) FBI Case Information (UNCLASSIFIED).
25 (U) FBI Case Information (UNCLASSIFIED).
27 (U) FBI Case Information (UNCLASSIFIED).
28 (U) FBI Case Information (UNCLASSIFIED).
29 (U) Compare FBI Intelligence Assessment, White Supremacy: Contexts and Constraints for Suicide Terrorism, 20 April 2007: 5-6 (UNCLASSIFIED).
30 (U) FBI Case Information (UNCLASSIFIED).
32 (U) FBI Case Information (UNCLASSIFIED).
33 (U) FBI Case Information (UNCLASSIFIED).
34 (U) FBI Case Information (UNCLASSIFIED).
36 (U) FBI Case Information (UNCLASSIFIED).
37 (U) FBI Case Information (UNCLASSIFIED).
38 (U) FBI Case Information (UNCLASSIFIED).
39 (U) FBI Case Information (UNCLASSIFIED).
40 (U) For example, FBI IIR 4 201 2225 08, 1 January 2008 (UNCLASSIFIED); (U) FBI IIR 4 201 2181 08, 11 January 2008 (UNCLASSIFIED).
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2. 2 3 4 5 N/A The product was timely and relevant to your mission, programs, priorities or initiatives.

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