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(U//FOUO) Rightwing Extremism: Current Economic and Political Climate Fueling Resurgence in Radicalization and Recruitment

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(U) Prepared by the Extremism and Radicalization Branch, Homeland Environment Threat Analysis Division. Coordinated with the FBI.

(U) Scope

(U//FOUO) This product is one of a series of intelligence assessments published by the Extremism and Radicalization Branch to facilitate a greater understanding of the phenomenon of violent radicalization in the United States. The information is provided to federal, state, local, and tribal counterterrorism and law enforcement officials so they may effectively deter, prevent, preempt, or respond to terrorist attacks against the United States. Federal efforts to influence domestic public opinion must be conducted in an overt and transparent manner, clearly identifying United States Government sponsorship.

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- (U//FOUO) Proposed imposition of firearms restrictions and weapons bans likely would attract new members into the ranks of rightwing extremist groups, as well as potentially spur some of them to begin planning and training for violence against the government. The high volume of purchases and stockpiling of weapons and ammunition by rightwing extremists in anticipation of restrictions and bans in some parts of the country continue to be a primary concern to law enforcement.
- (U//FOUO) Returning veterans possess combat skills and experience that are attractive to rightwing extremists. DHS/I&A is concerned that rightwing extremists will attempt to recruit and radi

ownership and use. Rightwing extremists are increasingly galvanized by these concerns and leverage them as drivers for recruitment. From the 2008 election timeframe to the present, rightwing extremists have capitalized on related racial and political prejudices in expanded propaganda campaigns, thereby reaching out to a wider audience of potential sympathizers.

 (U//LES) Most statements by rightwing extremists have been rhetorical, expressing concerns about the election of the first African American president, but stopping short of calls for violent action. In two instances in the run-up to the election, extremists appeared to be in the early planning stages of some threatening activity targeting the Democratic nominee, but law enforcement interceded.

(U) Revisiting the 1990s

(U//FOUO) Paralleling the current national climate, rightwing extremists during the 1990s exploited a variety of social issues and political themes to increase group visibility and recruit new members. Prominent among these themes were the militia movement's opposition to gun control efforts, criticism of free trade agreements (particularly those

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(U//FOUO) Perceptions on Poverty and Radicalization

(U//FOUO) Scholars and experts disagree over poverty's role in motivating violent radicalization or terrorist activity. High unemployment, however, has the potential to lead to alienation, thus increasing an individual's susceptibility to extremist ideas. According to a 2007 study from the German Institute for Economic Research, there appears to be a strong association between a parent's unemployment status and the formation of rightwing extremist beliefs in their children—specifically xenophobia and antidemocratic ideals.

(U) Illegal Immigration

(U//FOUO) Rightwing extremists were concerned during the 1990s with the perception that illegal immigrants were taking away American jobs through their willingness to work at significantly lower wages. They also opposed free trade agreements, arguing that these arrangements resulted in Americans losing jobs to countries such as Mexico.

(U//FOUO) Over the past five years, various rightwing extremists, including militias and white supremacists, have adopted the immigration issue as a call to action, rallying point, and recruiting tool. Debates over appropriate immigration levels and enforcement policy generally fall within the realm of protected political speech under the First Amendment, but in some cases, anti-immigration or strident pro-enforcement fervor has been directed against specific groups and has the potential to turn violent.

(U//FOUO) DHS/I&A assesses that rightwing extremist groups' frustration over a perceived lack of government action on illegal immigration has the potential to incite individuals or small groups toward violence. If such violence were to occur, it likely would be isolated, small-scale, and directed at specific immigration-related targets.

- (U//FOUO) DHS/I&A notes that prominent civil rights organizations have observed an increase in anti-Hispanic crimes over the past five years.
- (U) In April 2007, six militia members were arrested for various weapons and explosives violations. Open source reporting alleged that those arrested had discussed and conducted surveillance for a machinegun attack on Hispanics.
- (U) A militia member in Wyoming was arrested in February 2007 after communicating his plans to travel to the Mexican border to kill immigrants crossing into the United States.

(U) Legislative and Judicial Drivers

(U//FOUO) Many rightwing extremist groups perceive recent gun control legislation as a threat to their right to bear arms and in response have increased weapons and ammunition stockpiling, as well as renewed participation in paramilitary training exercises. Such activity, combined with a heightened level of extremist paranoia, has the potential to facilitate criminal activity and violence.

— (U//FOUO) During the 1990s, rightwing extremist hostility toward government was fueled by the implementation of restrictive gun laws—such as the Brady Law that established a 5-day waiting period prior to purchasing a handgun and the 1994 Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act that limited the sale of various types of assault rifles—and federal law enforcement's handling of the confrontations at Waco, Texas and Ruby Ridge, Idaho.

(U) Outlook

(U//FOUO) DHS/I&A assesses that the combination of environmental factors that echo the 1990s, including heightened interest in legislation for tighter firearms restrictions and returning military veterans, as well as several new trends, including an uncertain economy and a perceived rising influence of other countries, ma