

Testimony of Dr. Heidi L. Beirich

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enforcement with an analysis on the state of extremism within the United States. In the most recent report, released this past February, the SPLC found that the radical right grew explosively in 2011, the third such dramatic expansion in as many years. The growth was fueled by fears generated by economic dislocation; a proliferation of demonizing conspiracy theories; the changing racial and ethnic demographics in America; and the prospect of four more years under an African-American president who many on the far right view as an enemy to their country.

The [number of hate groups](#) counted by the SPLC last year reached a total of 1,018, up slightly from the year before but continuing a trend of significant growth that is now more than a decade old. The SPLC determines hate groups by their ideology, as expressed in their founding documents or by their leadership. All hate groups have beliefs or practices that attack or malign an entire class of people, typically for their immutable characteristics.

The 2011 expansion was the latest in a string of

Obama became the Democratic presidential nominee and, ultimately, the president-elect. Even as most of the nation cheered the election of the first black president that November, an angry backlash developed that included at least two plots by racist extremists to murder Obama. Many Americans, infused

of the white race.” He has stated that his intention “during the race war is to kill Jews, immigrants, and other minorities.”

In other recent plots since January 2011: A neo-Nazi headed for the Arizona border with a dozen homemade grenades that he reportedly intended to use on undocumented migrants; a white supremacist attempted to bomb a Martin Luther King Jr. Day parade in Spokane, Wash., an attack that was averted when police dismantled a sophisticated anti-personnel weapon; and a man who officials said had a long history of antigovernment activities was arrested outside a packed mosque in Dearborn, Mich., and charged with possessing

men and women intent on rounding up undocumented migrants, and rightly called “vigilantes” by President George W. Bush, demonized immigrants and