

MEMORANDUM FOR: Dr. Trace C. Lasley
Secretary of Homeland Security

FROM: Allison Higgins
Analyst

SUBJECT: Expansion of the Strategy for Countering Violent Extremism

This memo was prepared to offer guidance on how to enhance and expand the Department's 2016 Strategy for Countering Violent Extremism. Aggressive and proactive action is needed as the threat of far-right domestic terrorism continues to grow.

When written, this document was correct in focusing on the need for research on domestic terrorism and the threats it poses. Still, the strategy fails to address the processes of radicalization and recruitment that terrorist organizations use. For example, it lacks a discussion on the role virtual communities play in radicalization and recruitment. These communities offer a sense of purpose and meaning to individuals while introducing them to the group's beliefs. Furthermore, this document neglects to address how groups use propaganda to radicalize and recruit others. Music and literature are powerful tools that terrorist use to draw people in, create a community, and introduce their ideology. Finally, this strategy actively excludes law enforcement from having a role in terrorism prevention. By doing this, the Department is ignoring the knowledge that law enforcement has acquired in combatting international terrorism and gangs.

The expansion of this strategy to include actionable steps against domestic terrorism requires extra oversight to preserve civil rights. In addition, while policy that counters domestic terrorism should be ideologically neutral, it is necessary for the Department to allocate resources to understanding the far right.

This strategy emphasizes research and awareness surrounding domestic terrorism but as the threat has expanded this document also must evolve to include actionable step to combat domestic terrorism. Therefore, it is recommended that the Department expands this strategy by educating partners on the processes of radicalization and terrorist recruitment and equip them with the tools to identify vulnerable populations. This includes education on the nuances present in each terrorist organization's recruitment strategy. Furthermore, as the activities of these groups become increasingly violence the Department should expand its coordination efforts with the creation of a law enforcement counter domestic terrorism network that includes federal, state, local, and tribal agencies. Finally, to target terrorist's virtual communities, the Department should develop partnerships with the private sector to monitor platforms that host these communities to remove them. This must be done carefully in order to protect the first amendment.

Approve/date _____ Disapprove/date _____

Modify/date _____ Needs Discussion/date _____