

Violent White Supremacist Extremists (WSE) are defined as individuals who seek, wholly or in part, through unlawful acts of force or violence, to support their belief in the intellectual and moral superiority of the white race over other races. The mere advocacy of political or social positions, political activism, use of strong rhetoric, or generalized philosophic embrace of violent tactics may be constitutionally protected activities.^{a,1,2,3} This reference aid discusses trends with WSE targeting and tactics, historical attack data and examples of lethal attacks in the United States since 2012, their geographic location, mobilization to violence as lone offenders or members of small cells, social media use, and common behavioral indicators during their radicalization to violence.

Key Points

- **Targets and Tactics:** WSE violence often targets racial, ethnic, and religious minorities, as well as government and law enforcement officials. Attacks are often against targets of opportunity rather than pre-meditated plots against previously identified targets.⁴ Since 2010, firearms were the most common weapon used in recent WSE attacks followed by knives and other edged weapons.⁵
- **Attack Numbers:** Between 2000 and August 2016, there were 28 attacks in the United States committed by WSEs, which collectively resulted in 51 fatalities.⁶
- **Geographic Dispersal:** Given social media's ability to virtually connect WSEs and the decline in the membership and influence of historically prominent WSE groups, WSEs are increasingly geographically dispersed throughout the nation.⁷
- **Lone Offenders and Small Cells:** Most recent attacks have been by male lone offenders or small cells, who are not acting under the formal direction of an organized group.⁸
- **Social Media:** While typically constitutionally protected speech, there has been an exponential growth online over the past few years in WSE themes and messages.⁹ Many WSEs use social media, as well as websites promoting WSE narratives, to share their views and connect with like-minded individuals.^{10,11,12}

Examples of Lethal Attacks^b

- **Charleston, SC:** Dylan Roof^{USPER} on 17 June 2015 shot and killed nine individuals at a historic black church.¹³ He published his manifesto online ahead of time in which he chronicled his disdain for minorities, especially African-Americans.¹⁴ Police arrested Roof the following day, and he was sentenced to death in January 2017 in a federal court after a jury convicted him of murder and hate crime charges.¹⁵
- **Overland Park, KS:** Fraizer Glenn Miller^{USPER}, who hated and desired to kill Jews, on 13 April 2014 shot and killed three people who were outside two Jewish centers.¹⁶ He was sentenced to death in November 2015 after being found guilty of capital murder, aggravated assault, and discharging a firearm into an occupied building.¹⁷
- **Oak Creek, WI:** Wade Michael Page—who was a member of the racist skinhead group Hammerskins^{USPER}—on 5 August 2012 shot and killed six individuals and wounded four others at a Sikh temple.¹⁸ Page also wounded a police officer who arrived at the scene. After he was shot in the stomach by another officer, Page committed suicide.

^a Domestic terrorism is not a specific offense in the federal criminal code. Furthermore, there are no officially designated domestic terrorist organizations like there are US Government-designated foreign terrorist organizations. The term domestic terrorism, however, is defined in the federal criminal code, and the Federal Sentencing Guidelines provide for enhanced sentences for those who are convicted of another crime that fits the definition of domestic terrorism. Additionally, the Department of Justice has successfully charged WSEs with a variety of criminal offenses including but not limited to murder, hate crimes, and firearms and explosives violations.

^b We have only included a selection of recent lethal WSE attacks in which the offender is deceased or has been convicted or pled guilty of crimes associated with the attack.

Behavioral Indicators of Possible Radicalization to Violence^c

A US Government review of recently mobilized violent extremists produced the below list of common, observable activities many of the individuals engaged in during their radicalization to violence. Some of the observed activities include constitutionally protected activity, which by itself may not be indicative of criminal activity associated with terrorism.

Posting on the internet or social media sites one's desire to pursue acts of violence in the United States on behalf of WSE goals;
Communicating with known or suspected US or overseas-based violent extremists in person or on websites promoting WSE narratives or social media sites;
Attempting to recruit or radicalize others to pursue acts of violence in the United States on behalf of WSE goals;
Seeking religious or political justification for engaging in or supporting violence in the United States;
Performing internet research for target selection and/or acquisition of technical capabilities, without a reasonable explanation, could be indicative of planning for attacks in the United States;
Newly engaging in firearms or physical training while expressing a desire to pursue plotting in the United States on behalf of WSE goals;
Conducting suspicious financial transactions to obtain the funds to acquire weapons, explosives, or precursors to build improvised explosive devices;
Destroying electronic media and deactivating social media accounts that individuals previously used to post their support for WSE goals;
Using cover stories to mask nefarious activities, such as plans to engage in or support violence; and
Giving away or selling possessions such as cars and electronics, maxing out credit cards, taking out money from student loan accounts, or borrowing money from friends and relatives, in conjunction with an expressed desire to pursue acts of violence in the United States on behalf of WSE goals.

Additional CVE Resources

For additional information on CVE-related research and analysis, strategies and frameworks, toolkits, organized networks, and grants, please visit the [interagency CVE Task Force's website](#).

^c **Radicalization** is defined as the process through which an individual changes from a non-violent belief system to a belief system that includes the willingness to actively advocate, facilitate, or use violence as a method to effect societal or political change. Some radicalized individuals elect to mobilize by inciting, supporting, or preparing to engage in violence.

- ¹ Cornell Law School, Legal Information Institute; 18 U.S. Code 2331; <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/18/2331>.
- ² The Hill; "Trump's Charlottesville response stirs debate on 'domestic terrorism,'" Katie Bo Williams; 15 AUG 2017; <http://thehill.com/policy/national-security/346613-trumps-charlottesville-response-stirs-debate-on-domestic-terrorism>.
- ³ Just Security; "The Reasons Why Dylann Roof Wasn't Charged With Terrorism;" Faiza Patel and Adrienne Tierney; 30 JUL 2015.
- ⁴ Anti-Defamation League; "With Hate in Their Hearts: The State of White Supremacy in the United States;" JUL 2015; pgs. 18-21.
- ⁵ Based on a review of US Government information, law enforcement reporting, and open sources; AUG 2017.
- ⁶ Based on a review of US Government information, law enforcement reporting, and open sources; AUG 2017.
- ⁷ Anti-Defamation League; "With Hate in Their Hearts: The State of White Supremacy in the United States;" JUL 2015; pgs. 5-6.
- ⁸ Based on a review of US Government information, law enforcement reporting, and open sources; AUG 2017.
- ⁹ George Washington University Program on Extremism; "Nazis vs. ISIS on Twitter: A Comparative Study of White Nationalist and ISIS Online Social Media Networks;" J.M. Berger; SEP 2016.
- ¹⁰ New Jersey Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness; "The Face of White Supremacy in 2017;" 6 JUN 2017.
- ¹¹ Anti-Defamation League; "With Hate in Their Hearts: The State of White Supremacy in the United States;" JUL 2015; pg. 5.
- ¹² George Washington University Program on Extremism; "Nazis vs. ISIS on Twitter: A Comparative Study of White Nationalist and ISIS Online Social Media Networks;" J.M. Berger; SEP 2016.
- ¹³ CNN; "Dylann Roof jury: Death penalty for Charleston church shooter;" Khushbu Shah, Jason Hanna, Catherine E. Schoichet, and Martin Savidge; 10 JAN 2017; <http://www.cnn.com/2017/01/10/us/dylann-roof-trial/>.
- ¹⁴ Daily Mail; "Roof named Charleston as his target in hate-filled manifesto that referred to blacks as 'stupid and violent' and detailed his wish for every Jew to turn BLUE;" Kieran Corcoran; 20 JUN 2015; <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3132670/Dylann-Roof-manifesto-Killer-unveils-Charleston-target-church-massacre-calls-black-people-stupid-violent-complains-s-no-real-KKK-help-him.html>.
- ¹⁵ CNN; "Dylann Roof jury: Death penalty for Charleston church shooter;" Khushbu Shah, Jason Hanna, Catherine E. Schoichet, and Martin Savidge; 10 JAN 2017; <http://www.cnn.com/2017/01/10/us/dylann-roof-trial/>.
- ¹⁶ Kansas City Star; "Death sentence imposed on F. Glenn Miller Jr. in hate crime killings;" Tony Rizzo; 10 NOV 2015; <http://www.kansascity.com/news/local/crime/article44100303.html>.
- ¹⁷ Kansas City Star; "Death sentence imposed on F. Glenn Miller Jr. in hate crime killings;" Tony Rizzo; 10 NOV 2015; <http://www.kansascity.com/news/local/crime/article44100303.html>.
- ¹⁸ CNN; "Police identify Army veteran as Wisconsin temple shooting gunman;" 7 AUG 2012; <http://www.cnn.com/2012/08/06/us/wisconsin-temple-shooting/index.html>.