

**Chairman Peters Opening Statement As Prepared for Delivery**  
**Full Committee Hearing: Domestic Extremism in America: Examining White Supremacist**  
**Violence in the Wake of Recent Attacks**  
**June 9, 2022**

Less than a month ago, an assailant entered a supermarket in Buffalo, New York, intent on slaughtering Black Americans, killing ten people and injuring two others before he was stopped by police.

Tragically, since that appalling attack, our nation watched with horror as 19 children and two teachers were murdered in their classrooms in Uvalde, health care workers were killed in a Tulsa hospital, and frankly, too many Americans in communities across the country were slain in attacks as they went about their daily lives.

These attacks, and the loss of these lives, is heartbreaking, and I appreciate the work of our Senate colleagues who are currently working through proposals to address the epidemic of gun violence in our nation. It's long past time for the Senate to take this action.

Today's hearing is focused on the specific, and heinous domestic terrorism threat that is posed by white supremacist violence.

According to the Anti-Defamation League, between 2012 and 2021, white supremacists were responsible for the majority of murders committed by any kind of extremist group in the United States. Of the 443 extremist murders during the past decade, 244 of them were committed by white supremacists. In comparison, murders committed by left-wing extremists, during the same time period, accounted for 18 of the 443 murders, or 4% of extremist killings.

And even this data likely fails to capture the full extent of the threat. In 2019, I authored a provision that was signed into law requiring the FBI and DHS to report to Congress and the public on domestic terrorism incidents, including the exact number and type of attack. As of today, they have failed to fully comply with this requirement.

In the years after the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks, our nation focused immense resources on combatting the foreign terrorist threat to our nation. There is no question those efforts were needed, and that they helped keep Americans safe.

But despite clear data showing the threat posed by domestic extremism, particularly white supremacist and anti-government violence, our nation's counterterrorism agencies have not been as nimble or as proactive as needed to effectively track or address this pernicious threat.

While I am grateful to the Biden Administration for laying out the first national strategy to address domestic terrorism, there is more we must do as a nation to stop the spread of the hateful and insidious ideologies of white supremacy that are leading to real-world violence.

In the Buffalo attack, the perpetrator allegedly posted a manifesto online detailing his carefully calculated attack and citing abhorrent ideas tied to Great Replacement Theory, a racist and dangerous ideology that claims Jewish people, immigrants and people of color are actively attempting to replace white populations.

This disgusting belief is at the center of some of the most horrific terrorist attacks we have seen in recent years.

At the 2017 Unite the Right Rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, neo Nazis marched in broad daylight chanting core tenets of replacement theory at one of the largest and most violent gatherings of white supremacists in decades, before an attacker plowed his vehicle through a crowd of peaceful protestors, killing one woman and injuring 35 others.

In 2018, an anti-Semitic terrorist committed the deadliest attack on the Jewish community in our nation's history, when he massacred 11 people and wounded 6 others at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

His motive for the attack was rooted in replacement theory, and he claimed he targeted the synagogue because they were supporting refugees who came to the United States.

In 2019, a shooter in Christchurch, New Zealand posted a manifesto online entitled the Great Replacement before livestreaming his attack on two mosques on Facebook.

And in the 2019 shooting in El Paso, Texas, the deadliest attack on the Latino community in our nation's history, a gunman killed 22 people and left dozens wounded. The perpetrator acted out of the belief of a "Hispanic invasion" in a manifesto he posted online that cited the Christchurch shooter.

Once relegated to the fringes of our society, these extreme and abhorrent beliefs are now a constant presence in our nation's mainstream. Cable TV hosts push them in primetime nightly, and public leaders amplify them to their followers, for their own profit and political gain.

These are public figures who should know the power of their words and their influence, figures who should know better than to spread these conspiracy theories and lies. But between political opportunists, and the power of social media platforms to spread memes, manifestos, and videos like wildfire, these repugnant ideologies are becoming normalized into our everyday discourse.

No longer do extremists need to be recruited or seek out like-minded individuals. They can simply log on to social media, or turn on the TV, and be presented with the hateful discourse that drives these violent and deadly attacks.

Attacks that not only leave traumatic scars on the victims and survivors and their families but terrorize entire communities, who will live with this threat in the back of their minds as they go about their daily lives.

And the consequences reach far beyond our borders, these ideologies often spread globally by white nationalist groups that share ideologies and tactics in online communities in chatrooms and message boards, as we saw with the Christchurch attack.

Although this Committee has spent a considerable amount of time examining how to keep our communities safe, and I have been proud to work with my colleagues to boost important security resources like the Nonprofit Security Grant Program, we cannot solve this problem by only focusing our efforts on hardening the likely targets or adding more security measures.

We must come together as Americans from all walks of life, and from all ends of the political spectrum, to condemn these poisonous ideologies and the violence they incite, if we are going to truly tackle this driving factor of our current domestic terrorist threat.

I'm grateful to our expert witnesses for joining us today, and I encourage my colleagues to join me in having a productive conversation about what our nation can do to turn back the tide on this hateful, insidious, and violent threat.