

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 12, 2020

The Honorable Christopher A. Wray
Director
Federal Bureau of Investigation
935 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20535

Dear Director Wray:

We write to bring your attention to and express our alarm about the growing threat of violent extremist groups like the Proud Boys in New Jersey.

As you may know, New Jersey has witnessed a resurgence of white supremacist groups, domestic terrorists, and other extremists motivated by hateful ideologies and increasingly willing and prepared to carry out violent attacks to further their despicable agendas. For instance, the New Jersey Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness (NJOHSP) increased the threat posed by white supremacist extremists from “moderate” to “high” in 2020, joining homegrown violent extremists as the most persistent hostile actors in New Jersey.¹

We are therefore alarmed by reports that Proud Boys members have appeared at various sites throughout New Jersey in recent months, including in Fair Lawn, Wayne and Hopatcong.² The group has been classified as a hate group by civil rights organizations such as the Southern Poverty Law Center. According the Anti-Defamation League, “The Proud Boys bear many of the hallmarks of a gang, and its members have taken part in multiple acts of brutal violence and intimidation.” This despicable movement which trades in violence must be unequivocally opposed and condemned. It has absolutely no place in New Jersey.

While the FBI “does not police ideology,” we believe that the clear threat and pattern of violence demonstrated by members of groups like the Proud Boys merits increased scrutiny by the Bureau to protect public safety. This is abundantly necessary as these groups increasingly seek to organize and instigate violence. We are also concerned that members of the Proud Boys or other unlawful militias or private paramilitary organizations may plan to target and disrupt rallies, polling places, or voter registration drives in the coming months.

That is why we respectfully request that you answer the following questions:

- Does the FBI currently consider violent extremist groups with ties to white nationalism like the Proud Boys to be a significant threat?

¹ “2020 Terrorist Threat Assessment,” *New Jersey Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness*, available at: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/54d79f88e4b0db3478a04405/t/5e9f332ff92d080928b942f9/1587491645834/2020+Terrorism+Threat+Assessment.pdf>

² “Proud Boys group part of a growing far-right movement in NJ, experts say,” *The Record*, 10/2/20 available at: <https://www.northjersey.com/story/news/2020/10/02/proud-boys-group-among-growing-far-right-movement-nj/3586693001/>

- Is the FBI concerned by violence at rallies organized by these groups across jurisdictions, including in Portland, Seattle, New York, and other cities?
- Has the FBI taken steps to disseminate critical information about the threats of violent extremism to law enforcement partners in New Jersey and around the country, via intelligence bulletins, Field Intelligence Groups, Joint Terrorism Task Forces, or other groups or memoranda?
- What authority does the FBI have, if any, to address instances in which individuals gather in public places under the guise of an armed militia, wearing military-style weapons and uniforms to intimidate members of the public?
- What is the FBI's strategy to protect Americans from a surge in violent extremism and an uptick of attacks from individuals associated with these groups in the coming months?

We believe we need a much more robust Federal response to the growing threat of violence posed by white nationalists, neo-Nazis, domestic terrorists, and other militias. Thank you for your attention to this urgent issue.

Sincerely,



Josh Gottheimer
Member of Congress



Tom Malinowski
Member of Congress



Andy Kim
Member of Congress



Bonnie Watson Coleman
Member of Congress



Mikie Sherrill
Member of Congress



Bill Pascrell, Jr.
Member of Congress



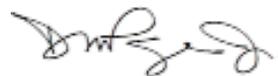
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