Anti-Government and Anti-Authority Violent Extremism (AGAAVE) in the United States

On August 11, 2022, 42-year-old Ricky Shiffer, armed with an AR-15 rifle and nail gun, attempted to attack an Ohio FBI field office. Police fatally shot him following a six-hour standoff. But his apparent rhetoric aligns with the explosion of anti-government or anti-authority violent extremism.

The FBI and DHS identify AGAAVE as a top threat

WHAT IS IT?
AGAAVE involves the potentially unlawful use or threat of force or violence to further ideological agendas. Derived from anti-government or anti-authority sentiment, these include opposition to perceived economic, social, or racial hierarchies, or perceived government overreach, negligence, or illegitimacy. The FBI has documented an increase in AGAAVE violence.

WHAT ARE THE TARGETS?
AGAAVE adherents most often target federal, state, or local government officials or agencies, as well as law enforcement officers. Some may select military-related targets or candidates for public office.

WHY NOW?
Following years of significant, politically charged events, there has been a marked increase in AGAAVE violence across the country. As indictments continue for the Jan. 6 breach of the U.S. Capitol, distrust and anger serve as a motivation behind recent high-profile AGAAVE events.
THIS ISN’T NEW

AGAAVE rhetoric describes two catalyst events as instances of government overreach — three killed in Ruby Ridge, Idaho, in 1992, and 86 killed in Waco, Texas, 1993. This stoked pre-existing anti-government fervor.

**1995**

Oklahoma City Bombing
- Antigovernment extremist Timothy McVeigh exploded a truck bomb by a federal building to retaliate for Ruby Ridge and Waco.
- 168 were killed; hundreds were injured.

**2010**

Pentagon Shooting
- An antigovernment extremist shot and wounded two Pentagon police officers in Arlington, Virginia.
- The attacker had authored a blog on government overreach, perception of theft of personal property.

**2016**

Malheur National Wildlife Refuge Occupation
- Antigovernment extremists seized and occupied the refuge, starting a 40-day armed standoff.

**2020**

Attempted Kidnapping of Michigan Governor
- 13 men were arrested for plotting to kidnap Gov. Gretchen Whitmer.
- The attempt was, in part, motivated by Whitmer’s early response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including implementation of strict public health measures.
- The suspects were purportedly tied to the paramilitary group, Wolverine Watchmen, which shares beliefs with the antigovernment Boogaloo movement.

**2021**

Boogaloo Boi Plot Against Law Enforcement
- Two Washington state men were indicted on federal charges for plotting to use explosives against law enforcement, “whom they perceived to engage in over-aggressive law enforcement action,” according to court records.
- Both identified with the anti-authority, anti-police Boogaloo movement.

**1996**

The Montana Freemen Standoff
- An 81-day armed standoff between federal government and members of the Montana Freemen.

**2014**

Foiled antigovernment plot
- FBI agents arrested three members of a Georgia militia group in connection with a plot to launch attacks on the federal government.
- The individuals had said in an online chat they hoped the attacks would spark a militia uprising against the government.

**2017**

Mass Shooting at Congressional Baseball Practice
- An Illinois man opened fire at a practice for the annual Republican congressional baseball game in Alexandria, Virginia.
- He was killed by law enforcement after a stand-off, but not before wounding six, including U.S. Rep. Steve Scalise of Louisiana.

**2021**

Breach at the U.S. Capitol
- On Jan. 6, extremist group members and some rally attendees attacked the U.S. Capitol to stop the certification of the 2020 U.S. presidential election.
- Over 800 U.S. persons have been charged with offenses such as seditionary conspiracy against the government, trespassing, and assaulting law enforcement.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- Report suspicious activity to the appropriate authorities
- Request a Community Awareness Briefing for your area
- Attend NCITE events

Sources: U.S. Department of Justice, Anti-Defamation League, George Washington University Program on Extremism
LEARN MORE

- On the militia movement
- On the evolution of antigovernment extremist groups
- On anti-government extremist terms, movements and beliefs
- On domestic extremism