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Federal agency warns of radicals on right

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The Department of Homeland Security is warning law enforcement officials about a rise in "rightwing extremist activity," saying the economic recession, the election of America's first black president and the return of a few disgruntled war veterans could swell the ranks of white-power militias.

A footnote attached to the report by the Homeland Security Office of Intelligence and Analysis defines "rightwing extremism in the United States" as including not just racist or hate groups, but also groups that reject federal authority in favor of state or local authority.

"It may include groups and individuals that are dedicated to a single-issue, such as opposition to abortion or immigration," the warning says.

• **[Click here to download a PDF of the report.](#)**

The White House has distanced itself from the analysis. When asked for comment on its contents, White House spokesman Nick Shapiro said, "The President is focused not on politics but rather taking the steps necessary to protect all Americans from the threat of violence and terrorism regardless of its origins. He also believes those who serve represent the best of this country, and he will continue to ensure that our veterans receive the respect and benefits they have earned."

The nine-page document was sent to police and sheriff's departments across the United States on April 7 under the headline, "Rightwing Extremism: Current Economic and Political Climate Fueling Resurgence in Radicalization and Recruitment."

It says the federal government "will be working with its state and local partners over the next

several months" to gather information on "rightwing extremist activity in the United States."

The joint federal-state activities will have "a particular emphasis" on the causes of "rightwing extremist radicalization."

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Homeland Security spokeswoman Sara Kuban said the report is one in an ongoing series of assessments by the department to "facilitate a greater understanding of the phenomenon of violent radicalization in the U.S."

The report, which was first disclosed to the public by nationally syndicated radio host Roger Hedgecock, makes clear that the Homeland Security Department does not have "specific information that domestic rightwing terrorists are currently planning acts of violence." It warns that fringe organizations are gaining recruits, but it provides no numbers.

The report says extremist groups have used President Obama as a recruiting tool.

"Most statements by rightwing extremists have been rhetorical, expressing concerns about the election of the first African American president, but stopping short of calls for violent action," the report says. "In two instances in the run-up to the election, extremists appeared to be in the early planning stages of some threatening activity targeting the Democratic nominee, but law enforcement interceded."

When asked about this passage, Secret Service spokesman Ed Donovan said, "We are concerned about anybody who will try to harm or plan to harm any one of our protectees. We don't have the luxury to focus on one particular group at the exclusion of others."

Congressional debates about immigration and gun control also make extremist groups suspicious and give them a rallying cry, the report says.

"It is unclear if either bill will be passed into law; nonetheless, a correlation may exist between the potential passage of gun control legislation and increased hoarding of ammunition, weapons stockpiling, and paramilitary training activities among rightwing extremists," the report said.

The FBI was quoted Monday as saying that, since November, more than 7 million people have applied for criminal background checks in order to buy weapons.

The Homeland Security report added: "Over the past five years, various rightwing extremists, including militias and white supremacists, have adopted the immigration issue as a call to action, rallying point, and recruiting tool."

The report could signify a change in emphasis for Homeland Security under former Arizona Gov. Janet Napolitano. A German magazine quoted Ms. Napolitano as rebranding "terrorism" as "man-made disasters." Since its inception in 2003, the department has focused primarily on radicalization of Muslims and the prospect of homegrown Islamist terrorism.

In January, the same DHS office released a report titled "Leftwing extremists likely to increase use of cyber attacks over the coming decade."

"These types of reports are published all the time. There have actually been some done on the other end of the spectrum, left-wing," Ms. Kuban said.

A similar headline was used in a report issued in January, Ms. Kuban said, although she could not provide the content of the headline.

Ms. Kuban said she did not know how long the new report had been in the making.

"The purpose of the report is to identify risk. This is nothing unusual," said Ms. Kuban, who added that the Homeland Security Department did this "to prevent another Tim McVeigh from ever happening again."

The Homeland Security assessment specifically says that "rightwing extremists will attempt to recruit and radicalize returning veterans in order to exploit their skills and knowledge derived from military training and combat."

Jerry Newberry, director of communications for the Veterans of Foreign Wars, said the vast majority of veterans are patriotic citizens who would not join anti-government militias.

"As far as our military members go, I think that the military is a melting pot of society. So you might get a few, a fractional few, who are going to be attracted by militia groups and other right-wing extremists," he said.

"We have to remember that the people serving in our military are volunteers, they do it because they love their country, and they believe in what our country stands for," he said. "They spent their time in the military defending our Constitution, so the vast majority of them would be repulsed by the hate groups discussed in this report."

The Homeland Security report cited a 2008 FBI report that noted that a small number of returning military veterans from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have joined extremist groups.

The FBI report said that from October 2001 through May 2008 "a minuscule" number of veterans, 203 out of 23,000, had joined groups such as the Ku Klux Klan, Aryan Nations, the National Socialist Movement, the Creativity Movement, the National Alliance and some skinhead groups.

"Although the white supremacist movement is of concern to the FBI, our assessment shows that only a very small number of people with prior military experience may have an affiliation with supremacist groups," FBI spokesman Richard Kolko said Monday when asked about the FBI report.

A 2006 report from the Southern Poverty Law Center, an organization that monitors white supremacists like the Klan, said that white-power groups had an interest in the kind of training the military provides.

Mark Potok, director of the center's intelligence project, said the Homeland Security report "confirms that white supremacists are interested in the military. There is some concern, and there should be, about returning veterans, one need only think of the example of Timothy McVeigh, who was in the first Iraq war."

Mr. Potok added that he was generally pleased with the report.

"Basically, the report tracks fairly closely with what we have been saying for some time now. They mention us a couple of times, though not by name," he said.

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