

FBI LABELS ANTI-FASCISTS AND ANTI-RACISTS AS VIOLENT EXTREMISTS

- *By Arturo Dominguez, [Unicorn Riot](#).*
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- A recently released Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) document titled “[Domestic Terrorism Symbols Guide](#)” links common protest symbols to “**terrorism**” — another marker in a common theme of conflating militant protest for social justice with deadly terrorist violence within the United States. Groups like the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and the Brennan Center have raised warnings about such documents, citing inadequate protections for people’s constitutional rights.

In a letter [to Department of Homeland Security \(DHS\) Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas on July 27 \(PDF\)](#), the ACLU voiced deep concern about the DHS’s “**domestic violent extremism**” label, standards for collecting and disseminating information to state and local law enforcement agencies, and the impacts these labels can have on disparately surveilled and policed communities.

History has shown that partnerships with local and state law enforcement agencies too often paint innocent civil and human rights advocates as violent extremists despite never exhibiting such behavior. From [Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X](#) to [Black Lives Matter protesters in Ferguson, Missouri](#) labeled as “**Black Identity Extremists**” and Stop Cop City [protesters charged with mafia-style crimes](#), proof of targeting groups speaking up for civil rights and

racial justice continues today — noted by the newly released FBI document.

(U) The word "anarchy" comes from the Greek anarkhia, meaning "without a ruler." Anarchist theory contends all forms of government are oppressive and undesirable and should be abolished. Anarchists believe anarchy ultimately makes possible the creation of a society ordered by individual freedom and mutual cooperation and without social, political, or economic hierarchies.



(U) **Circled Letter A:** Symbol associated with anarchism worldwide.

(U) Said to represent a French anarchist's maxim "Anarchy is Order," with the letter "A" for anarchy, or "without rulers," and the circle as a symbol of order.



(U) **Individual Throwing a Molotov cocktail:** Image sometimes depicted on flyers likely to encourage criminal activity.



(U) **ACAB or 1312:** Acronym for "All Cops Are B*stards" or "All Capitalists are B*stards." Instead of letters, sometimes the numbers "1312" are used.



(U) **Black Cat:** Image often symbolizing sabotage or to encourage criminal actions.



(U) **"ANTIFA"** (short for anti-fascist): refers to individual(s) who oppose fascism.

(U) It is more an ideological concept than a single organization or group, but likeminded individuals may collectively act together or form an anti-fascist group.



(U) **Colored Flags or Banners:** Anarchists may use different colors, often seen on flags and banners, to convey different anarchist constructs:

(U) The color black may be used to illustrate revolution, opposition to the notion of nation-states, or rejection or defiance of authority.



(U) The colors red and black together often represent anarchist schools of thoughts such as anarcho-communism or anarcho-syndicalism and the notion the working class will not submit to any master.



(U) **3 Downward Left Arrows Inside a Circle:** Symbol associated with anti-fascist anarchists with the arrows representing unity, activity, and discipline. Originally designed to cover over swastikas.



(U) The colors green and black often illustrate anarcho-primitivism or green anarchy.

Screenshot of various symbols listed in the Anarchist Violent Extremism section in the recently released FBI Domestic Terrorism Symbols Guide.

The document includes sections titled Animal Rights or Environmental Violent Extremism, Anarchist Violent Extremism and Militia Violent Extremism.

The FBI has established a category for MAGA extremists, noted former U.S. Army soldier William Arkin in a [recent Newsweek article](#). Yet, noticeably absent from the symbols guide was the branding of the far-right extremist Proud Boys which has [known connections to Trump, FBI agents](#) and local [law enforcement all over the country](#). Many instances of police working [in concert with known hate groups](#) while federal authorities have allowed them to operate with impunity have been uncovered.

This includes the attempted coup on January 6, 2021, that Open Source Intelligence Communities (OSINT) warned about and were ignored. A [recent DHS report on June 27](#), highlighted significant

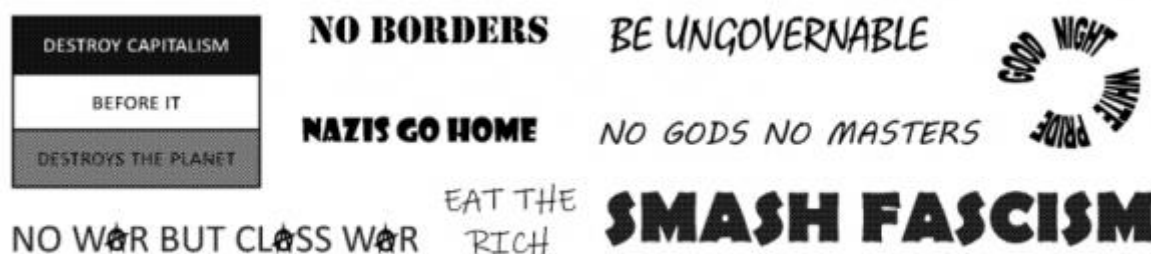
intelligence failures by the FBI and the DHS Office of Intelligence and Analysis (I&A) in the lead-up to the Jan. 6, attack on the Capitol.

However, [racists and bigots in law enforcement aren't new](#). While the FBI has issued [countless warnings over the last several decades](#), they leave out [which police departments neo-Nazis and extremists work for](#) — including those among the ranks of the FBI.

The notion that groups who respond to hate groups and fascist ideas are violent extremists is disinformation coming from one of the most powerful law enforcement agencies in the United States. Despite an FBI disclaimer stating that it “**may not base any investigative activity solely on the rights guaranteed by the First Amendment,**” it does not discount the problematic nature of how they use and pass on the information to local and state law enforcement agencies and the public at large. Information that gets people imprisoned or killed.

Unicorn Riot [has previously reported on problematic categorizations](#) that lead to arrests of civilians for exercising their constitutional rights. In 2018, we reported on several probes involving the FBI and then-U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Iowa, Matthew Whitaker, that led to the arrest of a Minneapolis man, and other snooping related to the 2004 and 2008 Republican National Conventions.

(U) COMMON PHRASES OFTEN DEPICTED AS GRAFFITI



Screenshot of graffiti listed in the Anarchist Violent Extremism section of the recently released FBI Domestic Terrorism Symbols Guide.

Problematic Monitoring Extends Beyond FBI to Homeland Security Structures

Created by the Patriot Act of 2001, [DHS has a reach never before seen](#) in U.S. history and it arguably does more to put people at risk than it does to serve national security interests. The department is intentionally commingled with local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies from its cabinet-level office within the White House.

The same style of flawed reporting led Kyle Rittenhouse to [show up heavily armed in Kenosha, Wisconsin](#), and to kill two protesters. The day after Kenosha Police shot Jacob Blake while protests over the murder of George Floyd were ongoing, former city alderman Kevin Mathewson wrote a racially charged “**call to action**” inviting [armed civilians to protect Kenosha](#) from “**evil thugs.**” The comments on his Facebook invitation, corresponding Reddit threads, and Infowars degenerated into racist threats to kill and maim protestors.

With DHS in the White House and federal authorities providing access to databases and loopholes for local and state law enforcement to target whomever they choose, it’s no wonder we’ve [seen murders like that of Breonna Taylor](#) where police were found to have used data provided by said databases and private corporations. And when police union leaders like Joe Gamaldi, the former president of the Houston Police Officers Union (HPOU) [threaten activists by saying](#) “**we’ve got your number,**” it’s clear that police aren’t the only ones with access.

After a botched raid that killed two innocent people using falsified information to obtain a warrant, Gamaldi said during a press conference “**we are sick and tired of having dirtbags trying to take our lives ... And if you’re the ones that are out there spreading the rhetoric that police officers are the enemy, well, just know, we’ve all got your number now.**”

Soon after Gamaldi's threat to activists, he was promoted to vice-president of the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP) who sits on the Homeland Security Advisory Council represented by FOP president Patrick Yoes. The FOP social media channels displays how harmful the rhetoric that the organization uses can be.

Not only have senior members of [the FOP expressed anti-Black views](#) in the past, but their position on the HSAC shows just how dangerous these groups can be with the kind of access they have while helping dictate DHS policy across the country. The organization [took seven months before they denounced](#) their "Blue Lives Matter" supporters that killed several police officers and injured nearly two hundred more during the January 6, 2021 attack on the Capitol.

Meanwhile, the role of federal authorities continues to be the targeting of various social justice movements throughout the country. From the "Green Scare" to the [arrests of environmental and animal rights](#) activists to prosecutors withholding [evidence against six Inauguration Day protesters](#) in 2017 in an attempt to secure convictions, ignoring the precarious nature of these loose classifications can further harm already marginalized groups in the United States.

- [Extremist Label](#), [FBI](#), [Police](#), [Surveillance](#)