



Strategic Perspective: Executive Analytical Report

21 August 2020

(U//LES) Adoption of “Boogaloo” Concept Likely Helps Some Domestic Violent Extremists Justify Violence, Provides Basis to Organize

(U//LES) The FBI assesses adoption of the boogaloo^a concept by some domestic violent extremists (DVEs) likely will help provide lone offenders and small cells with justification for violence and opportunities to organize with likeminded DVEs, potentially leading to plots and other illegal activity in the near-term. This assessment is made with medium confidence based on FBI and open source reporting. The boogaloo concept—in its current usage—began as an internet meme^b widely circulated on social media, where it persists today with the addition of real-world manifestations. Anti-Government/Anti-Authority violent extremists, particularly militia violent extremists (MVEs), increasingly co-opted the term to reference a second Civil War or impending insurgency against the government due to perceived overreach of authorities, especially those associated with the Second Amendment and law enforcement. The use of the term has accompanied a recent resurgence in MVE activity nationally in response to perceived abuses of citizens’ rights in the form of police-involved deaths of citizens, state-level gun control, and opposition to restrictions implemented to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.¹ To a lesser extent, racially or ethnically motivated violent extremists (RMVEs) who advocate for the superiority of the white race have exploited the boogaloo concept to denote a large-scale violent conflict closely linked with the tactic of accelerationism^c to allude to an impending “race war” or other violent conflict anticipating the collapse of “the system.”

(U//LES) Recent DVEs Adopted Boogaloo Themes in the Context of Violence and Plots

(U//LES) Many individuals use the boogaloo concept, its lexicon, symbols, and style, within the context of First Amendment-protected activity, often as a form of satire or commentary on current events. Due to its on- and offline applications, however, boogaloo themes are versatile and attractive for DVEs and others predisposed to violence. Since early 2020, multiple DVEs applied boogaloo elements within the context of attacks, threats of violence, or plots. While the desire for a racially or politically motivated conflict is not new among DVEs, the popularity of the boogaloo concept has magnified pre-existing themes associated with accelerationism and war against the government, and enabled such ideas to reach a larger audience.

- (U//LES) On 6 June 2020, local law enforcement arrested an USPER and US Air Force sergeant for charges related to killing a Santa Cruz County, California, Sheriff’s Office sergeant and wounding another deputy who responded to a report of a suspicious vehicle containing ammunition, firearms, and bomb-making materials, according to a criminal complaint. Prior to his arrest, the DVE reportedly wrote “BOOG,” in blood on the hood of a vehicle he carjacked. The DVE owned a tactical vest bearing a patch with an igloo and Hawaiian-style print consistent with boogaloo imagery. Further FBI investigation identified the DVE and an accomplice as the alleged perpetrators of the 29 May 2020 shootings of two federal security officers in Oakland, California.^{2, 3}

^a (U) The original boogaloo meme references the 1984 film, *Breakin’ 2: Electric Boogaloo*. Mainstream culture adopted the phrase “electric boogaloo” to comment on follow-on or repeat events in pop- and political-culture, such as re-elections. Militia violent extremists use the boogaloo derivative of the phrase to refer to a second Civil War, i.e. American Civil War 2: Electric Boogaloo. Proponents cultivated the meme by sharing images, videos, and rhetoric. “Big igloo,” “Big luau,” “Boog Bois,” “Boojahideen,” and other associated word-play in addition to imagery such as igloos, Hawaiian shirts, and leis, are used as coded references to the larger boogaloo phenomenon on- and offline.

^b (U) A meme is an idea, behavior, or style that spreads, often by means of imitation and often online from person to person, usually carrying symbolic meaning representing a particular phenomenon or theme.

^c (U//FOUO) Accelerationism is a concept suggesting the existing social order should be pushed to such a degree that Western countries become failed states, giving rise to changes that would reshape the world. Adherents advocate for acts of social disruption up to and including violence, and taking violent action to prompt responses that would gain support from those advocating for the superiority of the white race.

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- (U//LES) On 30 May 2020, the FBI arrested three Las Vegas-based USPER DVEs after the individuals conspired to destroy a public utility station or ranger station near Lake Mead as a trial run to confront the government by disrupting the US economy, according to a criminal complaint.^{4,5,6} The DVEs also discussed using improvised incendiary devices against law enforcement to cause chaos during lawful protests related to the death of George Floyd. The subjects self-identified as “part of the Boogaloo” and participated in a Nevada Boogaloo Facebook group, which one subject indicated was for people who wanted to violently overthrow the government, according to the criminal complaint.
- (U//FOUO) On 24 March 2020, the FBI disrupted an USPER RMVE’s plan to target a medical center in Missouri using a time-delayed vehicle-borne improvised explosive device, according to FBI information.⁷ The RMVE said he intended to “create enough chaos to kick start a revolution” and referred to his plans as “operation boogaloo,” according to an affidavit. The RMVE cited the likely increased impact and media attention on the health sector during the COVID-19 pandemic and his concern about impending restrictions making travel to carry out the plot suspicious as reasons to accelerate the timing of the attack and selection of the healthcare facility.⁸

(U//LES) Online Boogaloo Communities Provide Platform for Organizing and Sharing Tactics

(U//LES) Though use of the boogaloo moniker likely is not representative of a larger organized movement, the profusion of individuals and groups adopting or purveying boogaloo themes on social media provides opportunities for sharing propaganda, tactical or weapons guidance, and the potential establishment and networking of both virtual and in-person groups. This pattern has been especially prevalent among MVEs, who have established boogaloo-oriented online forums and self-identified groups, used the term to call for violence against law enforcement and government officials, and adopted visual displays of adherence to the concept, such as Hawaiian shirts, igloo imagery, and boogaloo flags. A similar trend within militia violent extremism is the “Three Percent” (III%er)^d moniker originating around 2008, which some MVEs continue to adopt to identify themselves. As with the III%er moniker, boogaloo displays of adherence are less indicative of membership in a single, overarching group, and more consistent with the communication and signaling of a common belief.

(U//LES) Outlook: The anti-law enforcement and anti-government sentiments of many individuals who espouse boogaloo themes provide opportunities for DVEs to use the concept to bridge ideological divides based on a common perceived foe and increase the likelihood DVEs of varying ideologies will continue to adopt boogaloo themes in the long term. While MVEs and RMVEs appear to be responsible for most boogaloo-related criminal activity, other DVEs may also adopt the concept in the context of threats against law enforcement and the government. Claims of police brutality, resistance to red flag laws^e and other gun regulations, and opposition to government restrictions imposed to alleviate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic probably will continue to provide recruiting opportunities for boogaloo-oriented individuals. The recent efforts of some companies to ban boogaloo-associated online groups probably will drive some to increasingly turn to encrypted applications, seek more permissive platforms, and restrict or obfuscate the names of groups on mainstream platforms, potentially hindering law enforcement collection.

(U) Prepared by Counterterrorism Division

^d (U) Militia violent extremists sometimes call themselves three percenters (III%ers) based on the myth that only three percent of American colonists took up arms against the British during the Revolutionary War. Some III%ers regard the present-day US Government as analogous to British authorities during the Revolution in terms of infringements on civil liberties. While many independent and multi-state militia groups incorporate III% in their unit names, the term is less indicative of membership in a single overarching group than it is representative of a common belief in the notion that a small force with a just cause can overthrow a tyrannical government if armed and prepared. Self-identification as a III%er or use of III% symbols should not independently be considered evidence of militia affiliation or illegal activity.

^e (U) Red flag laws or extreme risk protection orders (ERPOs) allow courts to issue orders temporarily confiscating firearms from an individual deemed to be a risk to themselves or others, typically at the petition of law enforcement or family members, but sometimes other individuals such as educators or health professionals as well.



(U) Endnotes

¹ (U//LES) FBI and NCTC | Joint Intelligence Bulletin | “(U//LES) Militia Extremists Present Elevated Threat to Law Enforcement and Government Personnel” | 18 June 2020.

² (U) Criminal Complaint | US District Court for the Northern District of California | “United States of America v. STEVEN CARRILLO” | 15 June 2020.

³ (U) Online press release | Department of Justice, Office of Public Affairs | “Two Defendants Charged with Murder and Aiding and Abetting in Slaying of Federal Protective Service Officer at Oakland Courthouse Building” | 16 June 2020 | <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/two-defendants-charged-murder-and-aiding-and-abetting-slaying-federal-protective-service> | accessed on 15 July 2020.

⁴ (U//FOUO) FBI | Case Information | 11 June 2020 | 30 May 2020 | “(U//FOUO) Arrest and Criminal Complaint - Andrew LYNAM, Stephen PARSHALL and William LOOMIS” | UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY | UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY.

⁵ (U) Online press release | Department of Justice, US Attorney’s Office for the District of Nevada | “Joint Terrorism Task Force Charges Three Men Who Allegedly Sought To Exploit Protests In Las Vegas And Incite Violence” | 3 June 2020 | <https://www.justice.gov/usao-nv/pr/joint-terrorism-task-force-charges-three-men-who-allegedly-sought-exploit-protests-las> | accessed on 15 July 2020.

⁶ (U) Online press release | Department of Justice, US Attorney’s Office for the District of Nevada | “Federal Grand Jury Indicts Three Men For Seeking To Exploit Protests In Las Vegas And Incite Violence” | 17 June 2020 | <https://www.justice.gov/usao-nv/pr/federal-grand-jury-indicts-three-men-seeking-exploit-protests-las-vegas-and-incite> | accessed 15 July 2020.

⁷ (U//LES) FBI | Case Information | 9 April 2020 | 24 March 2020 | UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY | UNCLASSIFIED//LAW ENFORCEMENT SENSITIVE.

⁸ (U) FBI | Case Information | 2 April 2020 | 24 March 2020 | UNCLASSIFIED | UNCLASSIFIED.