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June 6, 2023

DOJ OIG Releases Report on the Department of Justice's Strategy to Address the Domestic Violent Extremism Threat

Department of Justice (DOJ) Inspector General Michael E. Horowitz announced today the release of a [report on DOJ's strategy to address the threat posed by domestic violent extremism \(DVE\)](#). DOJ often refers to DVE interchangeably with domestic terrorism and defines domestic violent extremists as United States-based actors who, without direction or inspiration from a foreign terrorist group or foreign power, seek to further political or social goals through unlawful acts of violence. According to DOJ, threats posed by domestic violent extremists have not only increased over the past few years but are also becoming more complicated due to the emergence of new violent ideologies, the impact of social media, and the response to recent political and social events.

The DOJ Office of the Inspector General (OIG) identified areas in which DOJ can build upon its recent enhanced efforts to investigate and prosecute acts of violence and domestic terrorism, to ensure a cohesive and sustained approach to addressing the DVE threat.

The OIG's findings included the following:

- **DOJ Should Consider Formulating an Internal Strategic Framework to Promote Sustained Coordination.** DOJ does not have a formalized internal strategy for addressing the DVE threat. Although DOJ officials acknowledged that DVE threats implicate the work of multiple components, DOJ has not conducted a comprehensive evaluation of DVE-related initiatives and efforts to identify cross-cutting issues, shared goals, and operational efficiencies. As a result, DOJ faces challenges in ensuring that its various DVE-related efforts are cohesive, effective, and evaluated for lessons learned. Further, DOJ component officials were not always aware of or leveraging available resources, such as DOJ-funded DVE research grants and DVE-related training for state and local partners.
 - **DOJ Should Further Refine Its Efforts to Ensure Consistent Identification of DVE-related Cases.** In November 2022, DOJ codified and clarified guidance to federal prosecutors related to how to interpret the term "DVE." However, we identified that, prior to the November 2022 guidance, there were inconsistencies in how DOJ's guidance was understood and applied across DOJ, which impacts DOJ's ability to ensure a consistent approach to these cases and obtain an accurate picture of the DVE threat. We also found that DOJ could obtain more complete information on the DVE threat if guidance was given to all law enforcement components that may encounter DVE-related activity in their investigations.
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- **DOJ Should Routinely Evaluate the Efficacy and Civil Liberties Impacts of Its Efforts to Address DVE.** The DVE threat poses unique challenges for DOJ, given both the breadth of criminal conduct at issue, as well as the potential political sensitivity and civil liberties concerns. As DOJ continues to take steps to identify overlap between DVE-related cases and other types of criminal cases, such as hate crimes, DOJ should ensure that it is transparent and consistent in its guidance of how it defines and addresses DVE threats—underscoring that it treats all DVE threats objectively and consistently, without political or other biases. We found that DOJ should enhance its mechanisms to routinely evaluate the impact of its DVE-related efforts and approach, to include assessing any privacy and civil liberties risks with the assistance of DOJ’s Office of Privacy and Civil Liberties.
- **DOJ Should Build Upon Existing Efforts to Consistently Track DVE-related Cases.** In conjunction with DOJ’s efforts to identify DVE-related cases, the Department initiated a data-driven approach to understand the DVE threat. DOJ tasked the National Security Division (NSD) with the responsibility of tracking DVE cases across DOJ, yet we found that NSD does not fully deconflict or evaluate its data with separate DVE-related case data maintained by the FBI and the Executive Office for U.S. Attorneys. Inaccurate or inconsistent data could not only impair DOJ’s ability to assess, prioritize, and address DVE threats, but also risks further inconsistency in how DOJ quantifies and reports on the DVE threat. Consequently, DOJ should evaluate its various tracking efforts to ensure it has an accurate and consistent process for capturing, interpreting, and reporting DVE-related case data.

The DOJ OIG made 7 recommendations to improve DOJ’s overall consistency and coordination in addressing the DVE threat. DOJ agreed with all 7 recommendations.

Report: Today’s report can be found on the OIG’s website at the following link:

<https://oig.justice.gov/reports/audit-department-justices-strategy-address-domestic-violent-extremism-threat>

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