

The FBI Doubles Down on Christians and White Supremacy in 2023

By Kyle Seraphin - February 8, 2023



The FBI's Richmond Division would like to protect Virginians from the threat of "white supremacy," which it believes has found a home within Catholics who prefer the Latin Mass. An intelligence analyst within the Richmond Field Office of the FBI released in a new finished intelligence product dated January 23, 2023, on Racially or Ethnically Motivated Violent Extremists (RMVE) and their interests in "Radical-Traditionalist Catholics" or RTCs. The document assesses with "high confidence" the FBI can mitigate the threat of Radical-Traditionalist Catholics by recruiting sources within the Catholic Church.

The acronym, new to many in the Domestic Counterterrorism field, comes with a footnote by the writer explaining RTCs are "typically characterized by the rejection of the Second Vatican Council." The writer makes an unsubstantiated leap that a preference for the Catholic Mass in Latin instead of the vernacular and a number of more traditional views on other world religions can amount to an "adherence to anti-Semitic, anti-immigrant, anti-LGBTQ and white supremacist ideology." This writer draws the important distinction between "traditional Catholics," who simply prefer the Traditional Latin Mass and pre-Vatican II teachings, and RTCs, who espouse "more extremist ideological beliefs and violent rhetoric."

A discerning reader may wonder why the writer believes such divisions exist and if there is evidence of the extremist and violent rhetoric within the Catholic church. The analyst's note doesn't provide specifics. When the FBI generates an intelligence product, it is important to note the analyzed sources. Typically, strict source vetting removes partisanship and bias, so a product is both consistent with federal law and can add value to the FBI's overall mission. Of note, this document was reviewed and approved for release by the FBI Richmond Chief Division Counsel, who is the office's top lawyer.

The attached appendices refer to a number of articles and the out-of-FBI-policy Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) at the end of the document. For example, Appendix D is a direct copy of the SPLC list of "Radical Traditional Catholicism Hate Groups," including the web address accessed. The SPLC appears to be a source for the intelligence analyst's beliefs that RTCs exist and that they are anti-Semitic. The SPLC description for this "hate group" states RTCs "may make up the largest single group of serious anti-semites in America." Often in the intelligence world, this type of statement without any established evidence is often followed by the acronym "NFI" or "No Further Information" to indicate it is an unsubstantiated opinion. Additionally, SPLC states RTCs "embrace extremely conservative social ideals with respect to women." Nothing reported by the SPLC indicates the number of adherents to this alleged ideology nor any instances of violence. This lack of evidence and blatant partisan blindness is one of many reasons the FBI has distanced itself from the SPLC as a source in the past 10 years. The intelligence product includes endnote citations from two other sources: the far-Left online magazine [Salon](#) and the equally left-leaning [The Atlantic](#). The Salon articles cited are typical of partisan click-bait writing: "*Traditional Catholics and White Nationalist Groypers Forge a new Far-Right Youth Movement*" and "*White Nationalists Get Religion: On the Far-Right Fringe, Catholics and Racists Forge a movement.*" These articles were released a day apart as a series but include substantially the same information. The articles offer only circumstantial suggestions of affiliations between inflammatory figures like Milo Yiannopoulos and Nick Fuentes and a man pictured standing on the steps of a Catholic church in New York after the Dobbs decision. The Salon writer makes the wild leap that using a photo of someone at a church indicates the pictured individual or his beliefs are relevant within a religious institution with 70 million adherents in the United States alone and over 2000 years of tradition and history.

The writer determines that the "threat picture" involving RMVE, again in this case, referring to white supremacists, will increase, but that the "RTC Community is likely to remain relatively stable or show modest growth" over the next one to two years. The basis for this assessment is not annotated and appears to be speculative. The speculative increase in RMVE interactions with RTC leads the writer to suggest mitigation strategies, including recruiting Confidential Human Sources ("source development"), tripwire, and liaison contacts. Tripwires and liaisons are overt contacts with trusted members of a community or an industry. They can advise law enforcement about potentially illegal activity. Due to the fact that "white supremacy" is itself a First Amendment-protected belief, to say nothing of proponents of the most established Christian denomination in the world, the Bureau tries to cover documents like these with a caveat excusing their intrusion into the sacrosanct grounds of free exercise of religion and free association. In another typical intrusion into First Amendment concerns, the document implies a strategy of monitoring social media for RTC ideology in online posts.

The impetus of the writer can be assessed by the fixation on abortion and the repeated use of the phrase "abortion rights." Documents like these can be used to drive the FBI's priorities in specific regions and boost the visibility of non-existent threats. There is a reason the writer refers to the document as a "first of its kind" Domain Perspective: it is generally out of bounds. However, intelligence products like this help focus on alleged "hostility towards the abortion-rights advocates," which the FBI has used to justify significant enforcement actions tied to the FACE Act (18 USC 248). Americans will remember a flood of conservative news outlets covering arrests of numerous pro-life protesters at the end of 2022, which are coming back into focus after the January 30, 2023 acquittal of defendant [Mark Houck](#). While over 100 instances of attacks on pro-life pregnancy centers occurred in 2022, the SPLC reported an unsubstantiated 200 "bombings or arson attacks" on abortion clinics in the past 20 years.

This tremendous statistical mismatch usually would have led federal law enforcement to focus on the highest threat, but the increasingly Leftist bend of FBI enforcement actions appears to have ignored this trend. It also appears the writer is simply assuming RMVEs share common cause with Conservatives, including practicing Catholics, on issues about abortion, immigration, affirmative action, and LGBTQ protections. This editorial bias should give the reader of this document a medium to high confidence the intelligence analyst is the product of left-leaning higher education and leftist values.

The piece concludes with the incredible leap that RMVEs or white supremacists pose a threat to use "RTC social media sites" (no examples) or "places of worship as facilitation platforms to promote violence." This intelligence product is indicative of a permissive tolerance within the FBI for Left-leaning ideological actors who use academic-sounding rhetoric to cover a dearth of personal experience. The weaponization of the FBI against conservative Americans can be seen in the way documents like this are published and distributed. Poorly sourced and highly speculative intelligence products lead to opening badly articulated predicate investigations into Americans in violation of their God-given, First Amendment-protected civil liberties.

While most Americans are familiar with criminal investigations, which explore the allegation or information that a crime has been committed, many are not familiar with intelligence investigations. In contrast to the linear nature of a criminal case, counterintelligence and counterterrorism cases follow a circular path that can continue indefinitely without any articulated goal. Indeed, information is the goal of these types of cases. Many counterterrorism cases never articulate or uncover a single criminal act. Yet, they continue in order to develop more understanding of the “threat landscape” or “threat pictures,” as quoted in this document. Intelligence investigations often beget more investigations. The relevance of this product should not be lost on the reader.

Products like this can be used to support the opening of information-only cases, and there is no reason to expect Radical-Traditionalist Catholics are the end point of this train track – they will be the beginning. Opening the door to associating white supremacists with traditional religious practices based on common Christian positions on abortion and the LGBTQ political agendas is a dangerous step. Such investigations can easily lead to the same analysis of Radical Traditional Baptists, Radical Traditional Lutherans, and Radical Traditional Evangelicals. The FBI is forbidden from opening cases or publishing products based solely on First Amendment-protected activities. By tolerating the publishing of intelligence products as shoddy as this, they are crossing a line many Americans will find themselves on the wrong side of for the first time in history. This is what a politicalized FBI looks like; it should not be tolerated if Americans expect to enjoy the protections of our Bill of Rights.

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