

Press Release

April 15, 2009

Contact: DHS Press Office, 202-282-8010

STATEMENT BY U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY SECRETARY JANET NAPOLITANO ON THE THREAT OF RIGHT-WING EXTREMISM

The primary mission of this department is to prevent terrorist attacks on our nation. The document on right-wing extremism sent last week by this department's Office of Intelligence and Analysis is one in an ongoing series of assessments to provide situational awareness to state, local and tribal law enforcement agencies on the phenomenon and trends of violent radicalization in the United States. I was briefed on the general topic, which is one that struck a nerve as someone personally involved in the Timothy McVeigh prosecution.

Let me be very clear: we monitor the risks of violent extremism taking root here in the United States. We don't have the luxury of focusing our efforts on one group; we must protect the country from terrorism whether foreign or homegrown, and regardless of the ideology that motivates its violence.

We are on the lookout for criminal and terrorist activity but we do not – nor will we ever – monitor ideology or political beliefs. We take seriously our responsibility to protect the civil rights and liberties of the American people, including subjecting our activities to rigorous oversight from numerous internal and external sources.

I am aware of the letter from American Legion National Commander Rehbein, and my staff has already contacted him to set up a meeting next week once I return from travel. I will tell him face-to-face that we honor veterans at DHS and employ thousands across the department, up to and including the Deputy Secretary.

As the department responsible for protecting the homeland, DHS will continue to work with its state and local partners to prevent and protect against the potential threat to the United States associated with any rise in violent extremist activity.