



(U) Adherence to QAnon Conspiracy Theory by Some Domestic Violent Extremists

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(U) The participation of some domestic violent extremists^a (DVE) who are also self-identified QAnon adherents in the violent siege of the US Capitol on 6 January underscores how the current environment likely will continue to act as a catalyst for some to begin accepting the legitimacy of violent action. QAnon refers to a complex and constantly evolving conspiracy theory that is promoted by a decentralized online community that has morphed into a real-world movement. Its foundational principle holds that a corrupt cabal of 'global elites' and 'deep state' actors run a Satan-worshipping international child sex trafficking ring, and engaged in plots to conduct a coup against a former President of the United States while he was in office. These alleged crimes by members of the cabal will allegedly be punished by their mass military detention in Guantanamo Bay and likely execution. QAnon narratives are constantly expanding to include false information about current events—including alleged election fraud, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the dangers of 5G technology—that are then woven into the QAnon master-narrative.

- (U) The FBI has arrested more than 20 self-identified QAnon adherents who participated in the 6 January violent unlawful entry of the Capitol. These individuals were charged with violent entry and disorderly conduct in a restricted building and obstruction of an official proceeding, according to court documents and press reporting based on court documentation, public statements, and social media posts. According to press reporting based on publicly available social media posts, a woman who was fatally wounded by law enforcement after illegally attempting to gain access to a restricted area of the Capitol began sharing publicly available QAnon-related content on social media as early as 2019. According to the same press reporting, the woman publicly posted on social media on 5 January 2021 sharing commonly used phrases that appear in QAnon posts including, "Nothing can stop us... they can try and try and try but the storm is here and it is descending upon DC in less than 24 hours...dark to light."
- (U) On 7 January 2021 the FBI arrested a North Carolina-based DVE and self-identified QAnon adherent in Washington, District of Columbia, who was charged with interstate communication of threats after allegedly bringing firearms and ammunition to the District of Columbia and making threats against the Speaker of the House, according to court documents. According to press reporting based on publicly available social media posts and unnamed sources described as having direct access, the DVE erected a billboard with the message "#QANON" in 2018 and made statements to the press regarding a belief in the new world order, cabal, and "deep state."
- (U) On 8 January 2021, Federal Law Enforcement arrested an Oregon-based DVE and self-identified QAnon adherent on charges of destroying government property after allegedly firing several rounds at an

^a (U) Domestic violent extremists are US-based actors who conduct or threaten activities that are dangerous to human life in violation of the criminal laws of the United States or any state; appearing to be intended to intimidate or coerce a civilian population; and influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion, affect the conduct of a government by mass destruction, assassination, or kidnapping, as per the definition of domestic terrorism in 18 U.S. Code 2331 (5). Mere advocacy of political or social positions, political activism, use of strong rhetoric, or generalized philosophic embrace of violent tactics may not constitute violent extremism, and may be constitutionally protected.



Oregon federal courthouse, according to court documents. Two days prior, local law enforcement arrested the DVE for state violations including criminal trespass with a firearm for actions he took at the state capitol building during an otherwise lawful gathering, according to local law enforcement. According to press reporting, the DVE posted several publicly available videos online indicating support of QAnon, stating in one video “QAnon, yes it is real. I have been working with them. So yes it is real.”

- (U) In March 2020, a DVE allegedly derailed a train he was operating near the USNS Mercy hospital ship at the Port of Los Angeles to draw media attention to its presence, according to court records. The DVE told law enforcement that he derailed the train because he believed the ship had an “alternate purpose” related to COVID-19 or an unspecified US government take-over and wanted to “wake people up,” according to a law enforcement interview.

(U) **Outlook:** We assess that some DVE adherents of QAnon likely will begin to believe they can no longer “trust the plan” referenced in QAnon posts and that they have an obligation to change from serving as “digital soldiers” towards engaging in real world violence—including harming perceived members of the “cabal” such as Democrats and other political opposition—instead of continually awaiting Q’s promised actions which have not occurred. Other QAnon adherents likely will disengage from the movement or reduce their involvement in the wake of the administration change. This disengagement may be spurred by the large mainstream social media deplatforming of QAnon content based on social media companies’ own determinations that users have violated terms of service, and the failure of long-promised QAnon-linked events to materialize. Some DVEs have discussed how to radicalize new users to niche social media platforms following QAnon adherents’ migration to these platforms after large scale removals of QAnon content from mainstream sites. Adherence to QAnon by some DVEs likely will be affected by factors such as the severity of the COVID-19 pandemic, the level of societal polarization in the United States, social media companies’ willingness to host QAnon-related content on their sites, and the frequency and content of pro-QAnon statements by public individuals who feature prominently in core QAnon narratives.

(U) Prepared by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the US Department of Homeland Security Office of Intelligence and Analysis