

Investigation Reports Racist Extremists in Military

Written by Robert ID2814
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An investigative report released by the Southern Poverty Law Center states that under pressure to meet wartime manpower goals, U.S. military officials have relaxed standards designed to weed out racist extremists from the military. The result of those 'relaxed standards' is that large numbers of potentially violent neo-Nazis, skinheads and other white supremacists are now learning the art of warfare in the U.S. Armed Forces.

The report comes a decade after the Oklahoma City bombing and the racially motivated murder of a black couple by neo-Nazis in the 82nd Airborne Division prompted hearings by the House Armed Services Committee and a crackdown on racist extremism by the Department of Defense.

Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) President Richard Cohen, in a letter delivered today, urged Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld to adopt a zero-tolerance policy toward racist extremism among members of the military.

"Because hate group membership and extremist activity are antithetical to the values and mission of our armed forces, we urge you to adopt a zero-tolerance policy when it comes to white supremacy in the military and to take all necessary steps to ensure that the policy is rigorously enforced," Cohen said.

A military investigator is quoted in the report as saying, "We've got Aryan Nations graffiti in Baghdad. That's a problem." In addition:

-- A Department of Defense gang specialist estimates that thousands of soldiers in the Army alone are involved in extremist or gang activity.

-- Hundreds of neo-Nazis identify themselves online as active duty soldiers. These include an airman based at Warner Robins Air Force Base in Georgia who is pictured holding assault rifles in front of a swastika and Iron Eagle neo-Nazi banner. A military investigator there said that although he was aware of the airman's neo-Nazi identity, he interpreted ambiguous military regulations to mean that the airman "has to actually organize or recruit or commit a crime" before action can be taken against him.

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-- One investigator identified and submitted evidence on 320 extremists based at Fort Lewis in Washington, but only two were discharged. Investigators also uncovered an online network of 57 neo-Nazis in the Army and Marines who were spread out across five military installations in five states.

-- The SPLC informed military investigators about an active duty Navy SEAL who was heavily involved in neo-Nazi activities, but he was allowed to complete his tour of duty in Iraq and receive an honorable discharge.

"Neo-Nazi groups and other extremists are joining the military in large numbers so they can get the best training in the world on weapons, combat tactics and explosives," said Mark Potok, director of the SPLC's Intelligence Project. "We should consider this a major security threat, because these people are motivated by an ideology that calls for race war and revolution. Any one of them could turn out to be the next Timothy McVeigh."

The report, available on the SPLC website - <http://www.splcenter.org> , will appear in next month's issue of Intelligence Report, the quarterly magazine of the SPLC's Intelligence Project, which has been tracking hate groups since 1981.

The Southern Poverty Law Center is a nonprofit organization that combats hate, intolerance and discrimination through education and litigation. In addition to the Intelligence Project, its Teaching Tolerance program helps foster respect and understanding in the classroom and in communities across the country. Its litigation team, known for legal victories against white supremacists, handles innovative cases that fight discrimination and protect society's most vulnerable members.