

June 3, 2011

The Honorable Janet Napolitano  
Secretary of Homeland Security  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Madam Secretary:

In April 2009, a DHS report entitled “Right-wing Extremism: Current Economic and Political Climate Fueling Resurgence in Radicalization and Recruitment” came under fire for supposedly tarring those on the political right as potential domestic terrorists. Although you initially defended the report, DHS ultimately disowned it. We now have information that indicates that the unit responsible for the report was effectively dismantled as a result of the criticism that the report received. In light of the continuing danger to our country, we ask that you reassess the level of resources DHS is devoting to the threat of non-Islamic domestic terrorism. The department’s work should never be compromised by misguided criticism from any quarter.

I am enclosing an interview we conducted with Daryl Johnson, the former lead analyst for the DHS unit that wrote the controversial report, the unit responsible for non-Islamic domestic terrorism. In the interview, Mr. Johnson states that DHS “ended up gutting [his] unit” after the report’s release. He says that DHS first mischaracterized the report as unauthorized, even though it had passed through proper channels. He says that DHS then instituted restrictive policies that brought the important work of his unit to a virtual standstill. As a result, he says, he left DHS in dismay and was followed by almost all the members of his team, leaving a single analyst where there had been six.

Although Mr. Johnson’s unit may have been dismantled, events have proved its report to be prescient. In May 2009, the month after the report’s release, for example, an anti-abortion zealot murdered Dr. George Tiller in Kansas. That June, neo-Nazi James von Brunn murdered a security guard at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. In March 2010, nine members of a Michigan militia were charged with seditious conspiracy and attempted use of weapons of mass destruction in connection with an alleged plot to murder police officers. In May of that year, a father-son team of so-called “sovereign citizens,” people who believe the government has no authority over them, killed two police officers in West Memphis, Ark.

The pattern continues right up to the present. In January of this year, a neo-Nazi activist was arrested for planting a bomb along an MLK Day parade route in Spokane. That same month, another neo-Nazi was arrested on his way to the Arizona-Mexico border and later charged with possessing explosive devices packed with ball bearings – to “maximize human carnage,” as a federal prosecutor put it. In March, authorities arrested five members of a militia in Alaska and charged them with plotting

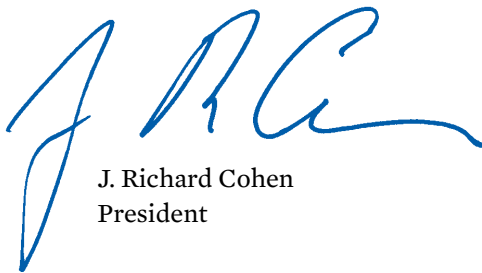
to murder or kidnap police officers and judges if their leader, who was then fleeing prosecution on weapons charges, were arrested or killed.

FBI Director Robert Mueller echoed the DHS report's warnings in testimony to Congress last year. He stated that "home-grown and lone-wolf terrorists" (including domestic jihadists) were, like Al Qaeda, a serious threat to our country. Our own independent experience in monitoring the radical right supports this conclusion. Given the country's continuing economic troubles, the furor over immigration, and the unease felt by some over our country's increasing racial and ethnic diversity, we believe that the dangerous period is likely to continue for some time.

For all these reasons, we ask that you reassess the level of resources that DHS is devoting to the threat of non-Islamic domestic terrorism. Law enforcement agencies at the local, state, and federal levels look to DHS to identify and assess possible threats to our nation's security. The department must always be in a position to fulfill its vital mission.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this very serious issue.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "JRC", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

J. Richard Cohen  
President