

The
Southern
Poverty
Law
Center

October 25, 1994

Honorable Janet Reno
United States Attorney General
United States Department of Justice
511 Main Justice Building
10th Street and Constitution Avenue
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Attorney General Reno:

On behalf of the Southern Poverty Law Center and its 350,000 supporters, I urge you to alert all federal law enforcement authorities to the growing danger posed by the unauthorized militias that have recently sprung up in at least eighteen states. Some sources put this number as high as thirty.

We have substantial evidence that white supremacists are infiltrating the leadership of these organizations. In our view, this mixture of armed groups and those who hate is a recipe for disaster.

The Justice Department's own experience demonstrates that the danger is very real. In 1984, for example, federal prosecutors in Seattle obtained convictions of 22 members of the Order, an armed and fanatical white racist group bent on inciting a race war that would lead to the overthrow of the government. Those convicted had robbed armored cars of over \$ 4.1 million, stored caches of military weapons, killed a well-known person from Denver, and planned the murders of many other prominent citizens.

In 1986, the Justice Department helped stop the paramilitary operations of the North Carolina White Patriot Party after our office provided evidence that active-duty military personnel were assisting the group and providing military armament. White Patriot Party members were linked to many crimes, including three murders.

Our office has confirmed the active involvement of a number of well-known white supremacists, Posse Comitatus, Identity Christian, and other extremist leaders and groups in the growing militia movement. Those individuals involved include Louis Beam, once on the FBI's Ten Most Wanted list and now an Aryan Nation leader, James Wickstrom, a Posse Comitatus

leader convicted of conspiracy to pass counterfeit bills to fund a guerrilla army, and James "Bo" Gritz, a notorious anti-Semite who has been closely associated with David Duke and other white racist leaders.

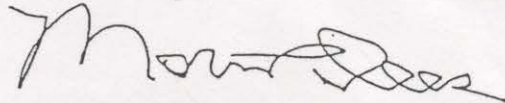
We have also received reports that active duty military personnel as well as National Guardsmen may be assisting some of the newly-formed militias. Based on our North Carolina experience, these reports are ominous.

Citizens have the right to form peaceful groups to protest gun legislation and to engage in target practice. But they do not have the right to possess illegal weapons, violate state paramilitary laws, or harass minorities. Based on the history of paramilitary operations conducted under the influence of white supremacists, I believe it is highly likely that illegal activity of this sort is already occurring.

I have enclosed a brief biographical sketch of some white supremacist leaders and others who are involved in the militia movement, a list of the militia groups receiving their help and a list of state militia groups that have no known white supremacy involvement at this time. I have also enclosed a press release issued by the Center today to alert the nation to this growing problem.

Please feel free to contact me or my staff if we can be of assistance.

Sincerely,



Morris Dees
Chief Trial Counsel

MD/jb

Enclosures

cc: Linda Davis, Chief
Criminal Section, Civil Rights Division
U. S. Department of Justice