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Opening Statement of Chairman Jamie Raskin Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Civil Liberties Hearing on “Confronting White Supremacy (Part VII): The Evolution of Anti-Democratic Extremist Groups and the Ongoing Threat to Democracy” December 13, 2022

Thank you to our witnesses for being here for this important hearing.

This will be our seventh and final of several years of hearings we’ve conducted on the problem of violent white supremacy, a traditional and pernicious enemy of the voting rights, civil rights, and civil liberties of the people. In prior hearings over the last three years, long before violent insurrectionists bearing Confederate battle flags overran the Capitol on January 6th, 2021, we found that violent white supremacy and its partner, anti-democratic extremism, today constitute the most serious domestic terror threat facing our people. Indeed, these same authoritarian and racist movements pose a similar danger to people living in many other democratic societies on Earth.

Just last week, German authorities arrested dozens of far-right extremists—including members of a Royal house in Germany seeking restoration of the Second Reich, an active-duty German soldier, former members of the police and elite special forces units, and neo-Nazi activists—for allegedly participating in a violent right-wing plot to topple the government and seize power.

The coup plotters, many of whom were heavily armed when arrested, were inspired by the bloody American insurrection of January 6th and are followers of deranged on-line QAnon conspiracy theories. They profess that the democratic German government is an impostor corporate subsidiary of the United States run by the American “deep state.” The German insurrectionists planned to disrupt the power grid and take Parliament by force to impose the new authoritarian and antisemitic government. The German people and democracies around the world are fortunate that their law enforcement and intelligence agencies acted with speed and vigor to interrupt the conspiracy before the conspirators could succeed in staging a full-blown January 6-style attack on the government.

It would be comforting to believe that the threat of violent white supremacy has subsided here in America in the wake of more than 900 criminal prosecutions being brought by the United States Department of Justice against January 6 insurrectionists and rioters for assaulting federal officers, destroying federal property, interfering with a federal proceeding, engaging in seditious conspiracy, and numerous other serious federal offenses. But the threats have not subsided at all and are very much still with us today.

On May 14, 2022, an 18-year-old white supremacist named Payton Gendron, jacked up on on-line propaganda about the racist and antisemitic Great Replacement Theory, entered a Tops supermarket in Buffalo with an illegally modified AR-15 semi-automatic rifle and murdered ten black people, wounding three others. He pleaded guilty to first-degree murder state murder charges, and has offered to plead guilty on federal charges, including hate crimes charges based on his premeditation to commit domestic terrorism, if the death sentence is taken off the table.

We are living through an onslaught of violent threats and attacks taking place directly against political figures too. Everyone knows that Rep. Gabby Giffords was the victim of an assassination attempt a decade ago at a constituent meeting in Arizona and Rep. Steve Scalise was also the victim of a deranged political shooter back in 2017 at baseball practice.

A month ago, an extremist who was loaded up on internet conspiracy theories and made statements like, “Hitler did nothing wrong” broke into House Speaker Nancy Pelosi’s home in San Francisco and bludgeoned her 82-year-old husband, our beloved Paul Pelosi, in the head with a hammer with the intent of kidnapping the Speaker and breaking her kneecaps. In the runup to January 6, Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer was the target of a kidnapping and assassination plot by racist anti-government extremists.

The Ranking Member, Ms. Mace, has seen her home vandalized, and her privacy violated, by someone who scrawled Antifa symbols.

We live in a violent society and the violence exists across the spectrum of political extremism. But the movements of violent white supremacy and anti-government extremism lead America in fomenting terroristic violence and disseminating propaganda to incite it. Both the FBI and the Department of Homeland Security identify white supremacy as the most lethally dangerous domestic terrorism threat our country faces.

This hearing will help us to understand the continuing evolution of the white supremacist and **extremist anti-government movement, specifically: the strategic turn of major far-right groups to focus on local governments and school boards since the January 6, 2021 riot and insurrection and subsequent federal criminal prosecutions; the mobilization of white supremacist organizations to attack the LGBTQ+ community in private clubs and public places; the emergence of Christian nationalism as an organizing ideological principle; and the growing prominence of the Great Replacement Theory as a unifying field conspiracy theory for the motivation of far-right wing politics.**

Please consider this video highlighting the proliferation of extremist violence against innocent Americans.

I look forward to the crucial testimony we will hear from our witnesses today and how we can best combat violent extremism.

I now recognize the Ranking Member for her opening statement.

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