

ONE HUNDRED EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

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February 16, 2023

The Honorable Christopher A. Wray
Director
Federal Bureau of Investigation
935 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20535

Dear Director Wray:

The Committee on the Judiciary is continuing to examine the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) handling of domestic violent extremism (DVE) investigations. Over the last year, we have written to you several times about startling allegations that the FBI is misusing DVE resources for apparent political purposes.¹ Since those letters, new information has become public about the FBI's targeting of a set of Catholic Americans for their religious beliefs. We therefore write to request additional information about this serious misuse of federal law-enforcement resources.

On January 23, 2023, the FBI's Richmond Field Office published an official document that linked "racially or ethnically motivated violent extremists" (RMVEs) with a "radical-traditionalist Catholic" (RTC) ideology.² In this document, the FBI purported to distinguish what it called "traditional Catholics" from the disfavored RTC adherents, who the FBI characterized as embracing "anti-Semitic, anti-immigrant, anti-LGBTQ, and white supremacist ideology."³ The FBI even identified certain public policy issues—such as immigration and life issues—that it believed would "catalyz[e]" RTC adherents.⁴ In addition to attempting to separate and categorize Catholic Americans based on theological distinctions, the FBI underscored the

¹ See, e.g., Letter from Rep. Jim Jordan, Ranking Member, H. Comm. on the Judiciary, to Hon. Christopher A. Wray, Dir., Fed. Bureau of Investigation (July 27, 2022); Letter from Rep. Jim Jordan, Ranking Member, H. Comm. on the Judiciary, to Hon. Christopher A. Wray, Dir., Fed. Bureau of Investigation (Sept. 14, 2022); Letter from Rep. Jim Jordan, Ranking Member, H. Comm. on the Judiciary, to Hon. Christopher A. Wray, Dir., Fed. Bureau of Investigation (Sept. 19, 2022).

² Fed. Bureau of Investigation, U.S. Dep't of Justice, Domain Perspective, Interest of Racially or Ethnically Motivated Violent Extremist Radical-Traditionalist Catholic Ideology Almost Certainly Presents New Mitigation Opportunities (Jan. 23, 2023).

³ *Id.*

⁴ *Id.*

political nature of its actions: “FBI Richmond assesses RMVE interest in RTCs is likely to increase over the next 12 or 24 months in the run-up to the next general election cycle.”⁵

The FBI’s document cites to biased and partisan sources, including the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), *Salon*, and *The Atlantic*, to support its assessment.⁶ The SPLC misleadingly defines RTCs as “the largest group of serious anti-Semites in America” and believes to have identified nine RTC “hate groups” across the United States.⁷ The SPLC also identifies the broad term “Christian identity” as a hate group—a term that could arguably encompass millions of Americans with sincerely held religious beliefs.⁸ The SPLC routinely maligns several mainstream conservative and religious organizations as “hate” groups, simply because the SPLC disagrees with their views.⁹ The fact that the FBI would blindly accept and regurgitate the SPLC’s spin is highly concerning and undercuts the FBI’s assertion that it is unbiased and politically neutral.

In the wake of the backlash against the FBI’s anti-Catholic document, the FBI withdrew the document and blamed the local level field office for its creation and dissemination.¹⁰ However, there remain many questions about the genesis, review, and approval of this document, as well as the FBI’s commitment to upholding First Amendment protected activity. To inform our ongoing oversight of the FBI, please provide the following documents and information:

1. All documents and communications referring or relating to intelligence products about “racially or ethnically motivated violent extremists” and “radical-traditionalist Catholics” for the period of January 20, 2021, to the present;
2. All documents and communications referring or relating to the basis for the January 23, 2023, Domain Prospective, entitled “Interest of Racially or Ethnically Motivated Violent Extremist Radical-Traditionalist Catholic Ideology Almost Certainly Presents New Mitigation Opportunities,” approved and disseminated by FBI’s Richmond Field Office;
3. A list of the FBI investigations, local law enforcement agency reporting, and liaison reporting, with varying degrees of cooperation and access that the FBI’s Richmond Field Office relied upon to make its assessments in the January 23, 2023, Domain Prospective, entitled “Interest of Racially or Ethnically Motivated Violent Extremist Radical-Traditionalist Catholic Ideology Almost Certainly Presents New Mitigation Opportunities”; and
4. A list of all FBI employees involved in drafting, reviewing, approving, or disseminating the January 23, 2023, Domain Prospective, entitled “Interest of Racially or Ethnically

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ *Id.* at 11.

⁷ Southern Poverty Law Center, Radical Traditional Catholicism, <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/ideology/radical-traditional-catholicism> (last visited Feb. 13, 2023).

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ See, e.g., Susan Ferrechio, *SPLC finds fewer hate groups but still targets evangelicals, conservatives as haters*, WASH. TIMES (Mar. 10, 2022).

¹⁰ Kayla Bailey, *FBI labeling Catholics as possible violent extremists is an excuse to oppress ‘political enemies’*: Evita Duffly, FOX NEWS (Feb. 12, 2023).

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Motivated Violent Extremist Radical-Traditionalist Catholic Ideology Almost Certainly Presents New Mitigation Opportunities.”

Please provide this information as soon as possible, but no later than 5:00 p.m. on March 2, 2023. We remind you that whistleblower disclosures are protected by law and that we will not tolerate any effort to retaliate against whistleblowers for their disclosures.

The Judiciary Committee is authorized to conduct oversight of the Federal Bureau of Investigation pursuant to the Rules of the House of Representatives.¹¹ If you have any questions, please contact Committee staff at (202) 225-6906. Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Jim Jordan
Chairman



Mike Johnson
Chairman
Subcommittee on the Constitution
and Limited Government

cc: The Honorable Jerrold L. Nadler, Ranking Member
The Honorable Mary Gay Scanlon, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on the Constitution
and Limited Government

¹¹ Rules of the U.S. House of Representatives, R. X (2023).