

The Oath Keepers' Warped Patriotism: Political Violence and Insurrection



Middlebury Institute of
International Studies at Monterey
Center on Terrorism, Extremism, and Counterterrorism

Agenda

01

Who are the Oath Keepers?

02

How have they engaged in political violence?

03

What is the threat of Oath Keepers moving forward?



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Who are the Oath Keepers?

An anti-government, anti-authority, right-wing extremist organization

- “Guardians of the Republic”
- Fixated on alleged tyranny and social collapse
- Driven by conspiracy theories

What they aren't:

- Explicitly racist
- Explicitly fascist or neo-Nazi



How the Oath Keepers Operate

Political Activism

Misinformation

Paramilitary Activity



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Oath Keeper Phases

Founding Phase



Hurricane Katrina

Calls to Action



Standoffs

2016 Election



Insurrection

Anti-Government Contention



'It's the right of the people to abolish it to institute such new government as they think necessary or reform it. It's the people's obligation.' – Stewart Rhodes

- Bundy Ranch
- Sugar Pine Mine
- Malheur Refuge Occupation

Overlap with Extremist Entities

- Co-Travelers to hardened extremists
- Mike Vanderboegh of Three Percent
- Three Percenter bomb plots
- Battle for Berkeley
- March Against Sharia
- CSPOA



Charles Dyer

"Join the military? Depends on what you want to do with it. Me? I'm going to use my training and become one of those domestic terrorists that you're so afraid of from the DHS reports."



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Civil War

- a. On November 5, 2020—two days after the Presidential Election—RHODES sent a message to an invitation-only, end-to-end encrypted group chat on the application Signal, titled, “Leadership intel sharing secured” (“Leadership Intel Chat”), which, at that point, included MEGGS and others. In his message, RHODES urged his followers to refuse to accept the election result and stated: “We aren’t getting through this without a civil war. Too late for that. Prepare your mind, body, spirit.”



Politically Motivated Threats

State Government

"Gov. Brown, you want a civil war, because this is how you get a civil war" -Stewart Rhodes (June 2019)

Civil War Fear
Mongering

Rep. Maxine Waters

"We invite all patriotic supporters of the Constitution to join us in standing up against leftist attempts to impede the securing of our borders through intimidation and terrorism..."

Call to Action

January 6

"We need to make those senators very uncomfortable with all of us being a few hundred feet away." - Meggs to Rhodes

Insurrection

OR State Representative (fmr.) Mike Nearman



Expelled for orchestrating armed demonstrators access to locked down Oregon Capitol

Led to clashes between demonstrators and law enforcement wherein officers were assaulted physically and with mace

“Operation Hall Pass” - Advanced planning

Reminiscent of Michigan State Capitol and J6



WA State Representative (fmr.) Matt Shea

Expelled for acts of domestic terrorism and anti-government militia activity

Attended and Supported Bundy Ranch Standoff with Three Percenters

Attended and Supported Malheur Refuge Occupation

Associated with Oregon Oath Keepers chapter



January 6th

- 737 arrests to date
- 92 individuals affiliated with DVE groups - Proud Boys, Oath Keepers, III%
- 26 Oath Keepers
- Rhodes and 10 members are charged with seditious conspiracy



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Oath Keepers Legacy

If there was any doubt before, the reality of Rhodes and the Oath Keepers has been exposed. They are not the “guardians of the republic” that they purport to be in their recruitment drives and on their website. Instead, they have weaponized patriotism in an effort to subvert American democracy.