



Durbin: Instead Of Focusing On Real Threat Posed By White Supremacist Violence, Trump Admin Continues To Try To Vilify Protestors

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WASHINGTON – Following the one year anniversary of the racist and anti-immigrant attack at a Walmart in El Paso, Texas, by a white supremacist, who killed 23 people and wounded another 23, U.S. Senate Democratic Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL) today pressed Ken Cuccinelli, the Senior Official Performing the Duties of the Director of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and Deputy Secretary of Homeland Security (DHS), and Erin Nealy Cox, U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Texas and Co-Chair of the Department of Justice Task Force on Violent Anti-Government Extremism, on whether or not they agree that white supremacist violence is the most serious domestic terrorism threat facing our country.

During today's Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution hearing entitled "The Right of the People Peaceably to Assemble: Protecting Speech by Stopping Anarchist Violence," Durbin noted that an unclassified May 2017 FBI-DHS joint intelligence bulletin found that "white supremacist extremism poses persistent threat of lethal violence," and that white supremacists were responsible for more homicides from 2000 to 2016 than any other domestic extremist movement. Yet the Trump Administration has inexplicably made the decision to stop tracking white supremacist incidents as a separate category of domestic terrorism.

"Today's hearing only reinforces my concern that the FBI and DOJ are not taking adequate measures to combat white supremacist violence and are minimizing this growing domestic terrorism threat," Durbin said. "Instead of focusing on the real and significant violent threat of domestic terrorists motivated by white supremacy and far-

right-wing extremism—terrorists who have killed Americans—the Trump Administration has repeatedly tried to vilify protestors and conflate social justice movements with anti-government extremism.”

Both Cuccinelli and Nealy Cox conceded that white supremacist violent extremism is one of the most potent forces driving domestic terrorism. However, Nealy Cox claimed that she did not know anything about the Trump Administration’s decision to stop tracking white supremacist incidents as a separate category of domestic terrorism and could not explain why the task force she co-chairs does not focus on white supremacist violence unless it targets the government.

During today’s hearing, Durbin also pressed Nealy Cox and Cuccinelli about the role of any DHS personnel assigned to support Operation Legend, including those in Chicago, will be under the operational control of DOJ and report directly to DOJ officials.

“There is a genuine concern because of statements made by this President about some wide-ranging immigration enforcement as part of this . Are you aware of any plans to use these DHS officials that have been assigned to Operation Legend for immigration enforcement?” Durbin asked.

Nealy Cox said she is not, and that Operation Legend is meant to reduce violent crime. Cuccinelli pledged that DHS personnel would focus on Operation Legend’s mission of combatting violent crime and not routine immigration enforcement.

Video of Durbin’s questions in Committee is available [here](#).

Audio of Durbin’s questions in Committee is available [here](#).

Footage of Durbin’s questions in Committee is available [here](#) for TV Stations.

Since May 2019, Durbin has sent three letters to the Attorney General and the FBI Director, asking what the Department of Justice (DOJ) and the FBI are doing to combat the growing threat of white supremacist violence targeting religious minorities and communities of color. Most recently, Durbin [pressed](#) DOJ and FBI to take the initiative in leading a coordinated nationwide effort by federal, state, and local law enforcement and intelligence to disrupt and prevent these violent domestic terrorism and hate crime incidents before they take place.

Earlier this year, Durbin reintroduced the [Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act](#), which would enhance the federal government’s efforts to prevent domestic terrorism by

requiring federal law enforcement agencies to regularly assess this threat, focus their resources on the most significant domestic terrorism threats, and provide training and resources to assist state, local, and tribal law enforcement in addressing these threats.