

Clarification Regarding Report on ‘Prohibited Extremist Activities in the U.S. Department of Defense’

The [IDA report](#) on prohibited extremist activities in the Department of Defense (DOD) was the product of a review conducted over a one-year period beginning on June 21, 2021. The field work for the report was completed in March 2022, and the report was delivered to DOD in June 2022. IDA stands behind the rigor of the analysis and remains confident that the findings of the report, including findings with regard to the prevalence of violent extremism in the DOD, were solidly based on the best data available at the time the work was conducted.

IDA provided the following key points in response to media requests for additional information about the report: *The inside cover page notes that the research for this report was conducted from June 2021 through June 2022. In fact, the field work was completed in March 2022, and the report was completed in June 2022. The report was approved for public release by the Department of Defense in December 2023. The arrest data included in the report was the most current data available at the time that IDA’s field work was conducted. A significant number of January 6 arrests have taken place since that time, making additional information on participants available...*

At the time the field work was completed for this report in March 2022, the publicly-available data [from the data base on Profiles of Individual Radicalization in the United States (PIRUS) maintained by the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) at the University of Maryland] was only updated through 2018. However, the report’s conclusions do not rely on this data. Instead, the report draws heavily on reports published by START in July 2021, December 2021, and April 2022 which summarized PIRUS data through 2021. These three reports enabled IDA to incorporate the characteristics of the PIRUS data through 2021 into its report. The relevant data is discussed in detail on pages 28-36 of the IDA report and forms the basis for IDA’s analysis of PIRUS data.

Members of the IDA study team met with members of both START and the Applied Research Laboratory for Intelligence and Security (ARLIS) at the University of Maryland, College Park, in September 2021. IDA made multiple follow-up inquiries to ARLIS for further information – the last being in March 2022 – but was told that the desired information was not yet

releasable. For the PIRUS data, IDA relied on the START reports summarizing that data through 2021, as described above.

As discussed on pages 21-26 of the report, IDA met with individuals from across the military services, the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the DOD Inspector General's office who are responsible for tracking extremist activities in the Department (see pages 7-8 for a list of offices). At the same time, IDA also reviewed data from DOD systems that monitor disciplinary infractions committed by service members and that flag infractions related to extremist activities, as well as databases of published court-martial opinions.

Finally, IDA met with individuals from law enforcement agencies who are familiar with criminal cases involving extremist activities and addressed the degree of participation by individuals connected with the Department of Defense. As indicated on page 7 of the report, most of the IDA interviews were conducted in the period from July to October of 2021.

The IDA report specifically notes the limited nature of the data available in DOD systems, concluding that although IDA found no evidence of violent extremist activities by civilian employees or contractors, that did not mean that no such activity had taken place:

"IDA was unable to identify any data on extremist activities by DOD civilians or contractors. IDA notes that the absence of data does not mean the absence of prohibited conduct, only that to the extent that such conduct has taken place, if at all, it has not been well documented." (page 21)

...The report specifically notes limitations on that data and provides appropriate qualifications as to the conclusions that can be drawn with regard to the scope and nature of extremist ideologies and behaviors in the Department.

IDA remains confident that the findings of its report, including findings with regard to the prevalence of violent extremism in the Department of Defense, were solidly based on the best data available at the time the work was conducted, between June 2021 and March 2022. It is possible that new data that has become available since completion of the report could change these

findings... Based on the available data at the time of the analysis, IDA found that:

- *The vast majority of “military connected” participants in violent extremist activities are veterans, not active-duty members of the military; and*
- *The participation rates of active-duty members of the military in violent extremist activities do not appear to be disproportionate to participation rates for comparable demographic groups (e.g., males of a comparable age range) in the nation as a whole.*

The IDA report also expressly noted that “The participation in violent extremist activities of even a small number of individuals with military connections and military training, however, could present a risk to the military and to the country as a whole.” (page iv).

The first finding led IDA to focus on the factors that may make veterans susceptible to influence by extremist organizations and on strategies to counter such influence (pages 115-126); the second finding led IDA to focus on potential measures to improve the screening of military recruits and DOD civilian hires (pages 144-163) and other preventative measures, while warning against more extreme steps that could risk dividing the force along political and ideological lines (pages 134-141).

The IDA report is an independent analysis, not influenced by the views of its sponsors, that was overseen by IDA leadership and subjected to IDA’s technical review process...