



Federal Bureau of Investigation
Intelligence
ASSESSMENT

(U) Rage and Racism: Skinhead Violence On The Far Right

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Prepared by

FBI

**Counterterrorism
Division**

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(U) Rage and Racism: Skinhead Violence on the Far Right

(U) Scope Note

(U//FOUO) This intelligence assessment examines acts of violence by racist skinheads¹ between 1 January 2007 and 30 September 2008. For the purposes of this report these acts are limited to physical violence against persons (assaults, rape, murder) and property (arson). Threats of violence and violence by incarcerated racist skinheads who are members of prison gangs such as the Aryan Brotherhood are not included. The assessment is designed to help law enforcement become more aware of the violent tendencies of racist skinheads. The statistical information for this report is drawn from news reports available on the Internet, police reports, and FBI case information.

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(U) Source Summary Statement

(U//FOUO) The FBI's analysis of racist skinhead violence is based on intelligence reporting from multiple reliable sources targeting the white nationalist extremist movement. The data collected on incidents of violence by racist skinheads are drawn from established and reliable sources, as well as public source materials and police reports. The FBI believes this reporting from a wide variety of sources provides an accurate picture of the subject matter. The FBI has high confidence in the judgments.

¹ (U) Not all skinheads are racist. Anti-fascist skinheads oppose the racist skinheads and sometimes become the objects of their rage. The two factions often dress alike and cannot easily be distinguished.

(U) Key Questions

- (U) How pervasive is racist skinhead violence in the United States?
- (U) Who other than racial minorities are targets of racist skinheads?
- (U) How much advanced planning, if any, do racist skinheads conduct for an attack?
- (U) Which racist skinhead groups are most likely to commit violent acts?

(U) Key Assumptions

- (U//FOUO) Statistics on racist skinhead violence, while drawn from different sources, provide a reasonable approximation of both the level and types of violence in which these groups engage.
- (U//FOUO) Racist skinhead violence involve the commission of hate crimes since victims may be chosen because of ethnicity, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, or other societal distinction.
- (U//FOUO) Racist skinhead violence may be underreported due to victim intimidation or law enforcement inability to attribute anonymous crimes to actual perpetrators.

(U) Executive Summary

(U//FOUO) The FBI *assesses with high confidence*² that racist skinheads are the most violent element within the white nationalist extremist movement. The skinhead movement is an intense and aggressive subculture, into which the introduction of racism has led to often brutal assaults against ethnic, religious, or social minorities. Racist skinheads are not universally accepted within the white nationalist extremist movement but nevertheless play an important role. They are viewed as the movement's front line soldiers willing to fight for the white race. The FBI *judges with high confidence* that violence by racist skinheads is likely to continue as long as the combination of aggression and racism remain.

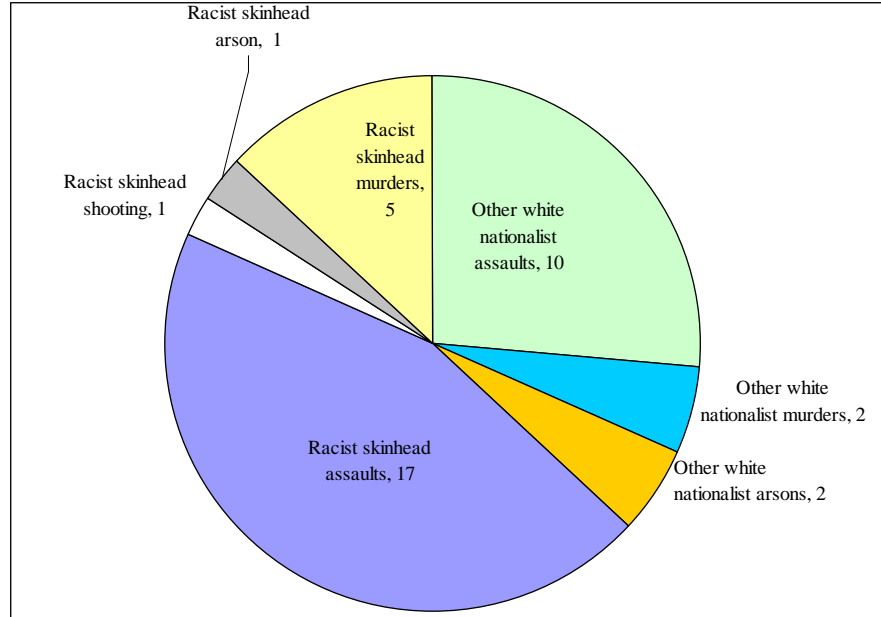
² (U) See Appendix A for FBI confidence level definitions.

(U) Racist Skinheads: The Most Violent White Nationalist Extremists³

(U//FOUO) The FBI assesses with high confidence that racist skinheads are the most violent element of the domestic white nationalist extremist (WNE) movement.⁴ According to information available to

the FBI, racist skinheads were responsible for at least 24 of 38 (63 percent) violent acts attributed to WNEs between 1 January 2007 and 30 September 2008, including 17 of 26 (65 percent) assaults and five of seven (71 percent) murders.ⁱ Targets included ethnic, religious, and other minorities, as well as other skinheads and other WNEs.

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(U) Skinhead acts of violence. (Source: FBI case information)

(U//FOUO) Racist skinheads have been

committing acts of violence in the United States since the 1980s. These attacks achieved national attention in November 1988 when three skinheads murdered an Ethiopian student with a baseball bat in Portland, Oregon. The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) called this attack one of the first skinhead murders in the United States connected to an organized hate group.ⁱⁱ Since then, racist skinhead violence has continued unabated.

- (U) In February 2006, the Anti Defamation League (ADL) reported on racist skinhead involvement in at least 83 criminal incidents during the several preceding years, including 17 murders, attempted murders, or acts of manslaughter.ⁱⁱⁱ
- (U) In July 1993, the *New York Times* quoted the ADL as attributing 28 deaths to racist skinheads since 1987, including 22 after 1990.^{iv}

(U) Aspects of Skinhead Violence

(U//FOUO) The FBI assesses with high confidence that violence is an integral part of the racist skinhead subculture and is reinforced by hate-filled white power music and literature. Skinheads have a reputation of being tough, which they foster through their appearance (shaved heads or

³ (U) White nationalist extremists include white supremacists—those who believe the white race is superior to all other races, as well as white separatists—those who seek to live apart from other races.

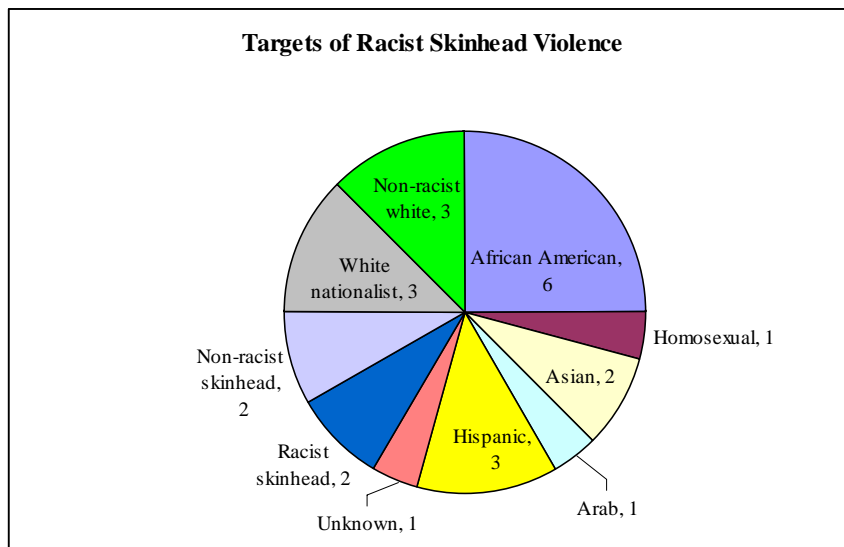
⁴ (U) As a group, racist skinheads were responsible for more violent acts (assault, rape, murder) during this period than any other domestic WNE element, to include neo-Nazis, Klansmen, and Christian Identity adherents.

close-cropped hair, white power tattoos) and dress (bomber jackets, “braces” (suspenders), steel-toed boots). Assaults may be committed to prove one’s dedication and loyalty to or elevate one’s status within a group. Alcohol consumption sometimes plays a role in racist skinhead violence leading to spur-of-the-moment assaults.

(U//FOUO) Racist skinheads often attack in groups and outnumber their victims, who are usually targets of opportunity. At least 17 of the 24 attacks (71 percent) were either unplanned or the victims were chosen at random. Assault tactics include “curb stomping,” where the victim’s neck, arm or leg is placed against a street curb and stomped on to kill or severely injure; “bum sticking,” knife attacks against homeless persons; and “boot parties,” kicking attacks using steel-toed boots. Skinheads often use their fists, brass knuckles, baseball bats, bottles, pipes, iron rods, wrenches, and similar objects designed to bludgeon. Guns are used occasionally, but often with fatal results. At least three of the skinhead murders involved the use of guns. Some racist skinhead crews (or groups) also participate in martial arts training.

(U) Violent Acts

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Source: FBI case information

(U//FOUO) Thirteen of the 24 violent acts (54 percent) committed by racist skinheads since January 2007 were against ethnic or other minorities. Targets included African Americans (six attacks), Hispanics (three attacks), Asians (two attacks), an Arab (one attack), and a white homosexual man (one attack). The violence included nine assaults, three murders, and an arson which may have been pre-planned. At least four

attacks resulted from verbal confrontations. Murder victims included a Hispanic male shot and killed during an assault, an Asian female shot and killed in her car, and a homosexual man kidnapped and strangled. The Asian female was known to her assailant, but the motive for her murder is unknown. The homosexual man was chosen at random; his two assailants initially intended to rob him (ironically, one of the assailants was later killed by the other assailant during an altercation).

(U//FOUO) Not all racist skinhead violence is directed against minorities. Ten of the 24 victims (42 percent) were white (excluding the homosexual) and included racist skinheads. The FBI judges with high confidence that racist skinhead attacks against fellow skinheads and other WNEs occur because the victim is either viewed as a threat or has disrespected the crew or a

crew member. The ethnicity or other identifying information of the victim in one assault is unknown.

- (U//FOUO) A murder and four assaults targeted fellow racist skinheads and white WNE associates. At least three of these attacks were pre-planned. The murder involved a fellow skinhead; the assailant may have believed the victim was trying to usurp his authority. Two pre-planned assaults were committed against fellow racist skinheads, including a suspected informant and a probationary member (probate) who did not have permission to wear the crew's patch. The other pre-planned assault involved a WNE associate suspected of being an informant. A skinhead associate was also assaulted at a skinhead concert.
- (U//FOUO) Two separate planned assaults were committed against non-racist skinheads. One of the non-racist skinheads was white, the other Hispanic. The latter was attacked because of his group affiliation rather than his ethnicity. He also had been in earlier fights with the racist skinheads.
- (U//FOUO) Three of the white victims were not white nationalists: one was killed during a home invasion to steal weapons, one was stabbed in a bar fight, and one—a member of a motorcycle gang—was shot and wounded after he allegedly threw a Molotov cocktail at the skinhead's vehicle.

(U) Infighting and Divisions

(U//FOUO) Discord and dissention exist among racist skinheads as within the WNE movement. One of the major issues confronting WNEs is a lack of unity resulting from political and religious disagreements as well as personality conflicts within groups and among individuals. Some of these same issues result in skinhead infighting.

(U//FOUO) Elements of the WNE movement seeking to portray a less violent public image view racist skinheads as too violent. Some racist skinheads may even be too violent for their own kind. The SPLC reported on racist skinheads from Indiana who, in 1999, used a blow torch to remove an group tattoo from a member deemed unworthy of further membership and sodomized him with a pool cue stick. The assailants were dismissed from the crew and formed another which disbanded in 2002 because of infighting.^v The skinheads' appearance and-dress is also rejected by those who consider neo-Nazi uniforms and Ku Klux Klan robes detrimental to the WNEs' image.

(U) Outlook

(U//FOUO) The FBI assesses with high confidence that racist skinhead violence will continue for the next several years. There is no evidence the skinhead's violent subculture will soon undergo a paradigm shift to a less violent lifestyle or that racist skinheads will suddenly become less racist.

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(U//FOUO) The FBI assesses with high confidence the greatest threat within the WNE movement is the individual who has been influenced by racist rhetoric but acts alone. This individual—the lone wolf—may either be dismissed from a group because of his violent tendencies or leave because the group is not active enough for him. The lone wolf is also a threat within the racist skinhead movement and may be even more dangerous because of the already violent attributes of racist skinheads. The most recent example is a racist skinhead lone wolf who firebombed a synagogue in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, in April 2004 and was subsequently convicted and sentenced to 39 years in prison.^{vi}

(U//FOUO) Most racist skinhead violence will likely continue to be spur-of-the moment attacks against random targets of opportunity. Planned attacks will not involve elaborate schemes or logistics but be simple and unsophisticated. Targets will continue to be persons of color, as well as other ethnic, religious, and social minorities. If the illegal immigration issue becomes more divisive, Hispanics—legal or illegal—could become increasingly targeted for violence. Racist skinheads will also continue to target fellow skinheads and other WNEs due to infighting or some perceived or actual offense. The skinheads' weapons of choice will continue to be fists, knives, steel-toed boots, and similar objects, as well as handguns.

(U//FOUO) The SPLC's *Intelligence Report* publications indicate racist skinhead groups have increased nearly 50 percent from 2004 through 2007 (48 to 90 chapters). The 2008 *Report* lists California as having the most racist skinhead chapters (17 in 2006 and 21 in 2007). The FBI assesses with moderate confidence these trends will persist. Racist skinhead crews will continue to recruit disillusioned youth who seek someone to blame for their social and economic plight (Jews, illegal immigrants, African Americans) and find an outlet for their anger.

(U//FOUO) It is unlikely racist skinhead crews will unite into one large group. Rivalries and personal differences will prove to be a barrier to forming a single, national organization. One event that could possibly alter this scenario would be a race war, which some WNEs predict will result from the current economic crisis and other issues. While the scenario is unlikely to happen, should fighting occur racist skinheads would put aside their differences—albeit temporarily—to fight for the white race. They would be at the forefront of the action, and their penchant for violence would be more pronounced.

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(U) Intelligence Gaps

- (U//FOUO) Which racist skinhead crews are collaborating with other WNE groups to commit criminal acts?
- (U//FOUO) Who among the racist skinheads can be classified as “lone wolves” engaged in criminal activity?

(U) This assessment was prepared by the Domestic Terrorism Analysis Unit of the FBI. Comments and queries may be addressed to the unit chief at (202) 324-0256.

(U) Appendix A: Confidence Level Definitions

(U) FBI assessments are supported by information that varies in scope, quality, and sourcing. Consequently, the FBI ascribes high, medium, or low levels of confidence to judgments, as follows:

(U) High Confidence generally indicates that judgments are based on high-quality information from multiple sources or from a single highly reliable source, and/or that the nature of the issue makes it possible to render a solid judgment.

(U) Medium Confidence generally means that the information is credibly sourced and plausible, but can be interpreted in various ways, or is not of sufficient quality or corroborated sufficiently to warrant a higher level of confidence.

(U) Low Confidence generally means that the information's credibility and/or plausibility is questionable, the information is too fragmented or poorly corroborated to make solid analytic inferences, or that the FBI has significant concerns or problems with the sources.

(U) Endnotes

ⁱ (U) These statistics are based on a compilation of FBI case information and open source news articles (UNCLASSIFIED).

ⁱⁱ (U) Online article, "Chaos to Conspiracy, Racist Skinhead Violence Growing More Organized," available at www.splcenter.org/intel/intelreport/article.jsp?aid=396, *Intelligence Report*, Southern Poverty Law Center, Fall 1998, (UNCLASSIFIED).

ⁱⁱⁱ (U) Online article, "ADL reports Resurgence of Racist Skinheads in US and Launches New Online Racist Skinhead Project," 7 February 2007, available at www.adl.org/PresRele/NeoSk_82/4860_82.html (UNCLASSIFIED).

^{iv} (U) Online newspaper article, Peter Applebome, *NY Times*, available at <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9F0CE1D8103FF93BA257540A965958260>, "Skinhead Violence Grows, Experts Say," 7/18/1993 (UNCLASSIFIED).

^v (U) Online article, "Motley Crews," available at www.splcenter.org/intel/intelreport/article.jsp?aid=688, *Intelligence Report*, Southern Poverty Law Center, Fall 2007 (UNCLASSIFIED).

^{vi} (U) FBI annual publication, "Terrorism 2002-2005," page 15 (UNCLASSIFIED).

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Comments (if any):
