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Office of the Attorney General
Washington, D.C. 20530

June 26, 2020

MEMORANDUM FOR ALL HEADS OF DEPARTMENT COMPONENTS AND
UNITED STATES ATTORNEYS

FROM: THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "W Barr", written over the printed name "THE ATTORNEY GENERAL".

SUBJECT: Department of Justice Task Force on Violent Anti-Government Extremists

I thank the many dedicated men and women serving the Department of Justice during these historic and challenging times. In recent weeks, we have witnessed significant threats to the rule of law. Amid peaceful demonstrations protected by the First Amendment, we have seen anti-government extremists engaged in indefensible acts of violence designed to undermine public order. Among other lawless conduct, these extremists have violently attacked police officers and other government officials, destroyed public and private property, and threatened innocent people. Although these extremists profess a variety of ideologies, they are united in their opposition to the core constitutional values of a democratic society governed by law. They seek, in essence, to become a law unto themselves by violently opposing those who stand in the way of their particular vision. Some pretend to profess a message of freedom and progress, but they are in fact forces of anarchy, destruction, and coercion.

Over the past month, Department of Justice components—in cooperation with federal, state, and local partners—have vigilantly disrupted violent anti-government extremists of all persuasions. The Department has investigated, disrupted, and—where warranted—prosecuted violent anti-government extremists for violating federal law in districts across the country. All involved should take pride in these accomplishments, which reflect the Department of Justice’s fundamental mission to ensure that our country is governed by law, not violent mobs.

While some of the challenges to the rule of law that we have seen in recent weeks are fleeting, others are persistent. We have evidence that anti-government violent extremists—including those who support the “Boogaloo,” those who self-identify as Antifa, and others—will pose continuing threats of lawlessness. Some of these violent extremists, moreover, may be fortified by foreign entities seeking to sow chaos and disorder in our country. The Department of Justice will respond to these violent groups in the same way we respond to other organized criminal or terrorist networks—by disrupting their violent activities and ultimately dismantling their capability to threaten the rule of law.

To strengthen the Department’s capabilities in this important mission, I am today directing the creation of a task force devoted to countering violent anti-government extremists. The task force will be co-headed by Craig Carpenito, U.S. Attorney for the District of New Jersey, and Erin Nealy Cox, U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Texas. The task force will include members

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of United States Attorney's Offices, the FBI, and other relevant components across the Nation. Drawing particularly on the capabilities of the FBI, the task force will develop detailed information about violent anti-government extremist individuals, networks, and movements—and will share that information as appropriate with federal, state, and local law enforcement, especially in places where these extremists pose a threat. The task force will also provide training and identify resources to help law enforcement at all levels identify, investigate, and prosecute violent acts by anti-government extremists. The ultimate goal of the task force will be not only to enable prosecutions of extremists who engage in violence, but to understand these groups well enough that we can stop such violence before it occurs and ultimately eliminate it as a threat to public safety and the rule of law.

Successfully countering violent anti-government extremists will require a determined effort by the Department of Justice, in cooperation with our partners at all levels of government. This will not be an easy undertaking, but I am confident that the men and women of this Department are up to the challenge. The task force we create today will lead the way in this important law enforcement mission on behalf of the American people.