



CITY OF CHICAGO
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

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Advisory Regarding Chicago Police Department Member Affiliation with Anti-Government and Extremist Groups

July 9, 2024

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July 9, 2024

On April 25, 2024, the Office of Inspector General (OIG) notified the Mayor's Office of concerns about the incidence and handling of allegations that members of the Chicago Police Department (CPD) belong to or associate with extremist and anti-government groups. This issue has been the subject of extensive press coverage, City Council hearings, and discussion by public officials. Nonetheless, OIG found that the City's handling of extremism in its police ranks has fallen short of commitments made by City and CPD leadership. OIG's Advisory to the Mayor's Office is attached at Appendix A.

In the course of its work mandated by § 2-56-230(c)(ii) of the Municipal Code of Chicago, OIG has reviewed several BIA investigations into allegations that CPD members have belonged to or associated with certain anti-government and extremist organizations—specifically, the Proud Boys, the Oath Keepers, and the Three Percenters. In its recent investigations—unlike in its own historical practice—CPD has failed to consider whether CPD members' associations with certain groups or organizations might violate CPD's Rules and Regulations, which prohibit "[a]ny action or conduct which impedes the Department's efforts to achieve its policy and goals or brings discredit upon the Department."

The issue of extremism in law enforcement is one of paramount importance as Chicago works to foster public trust in CPD, and it is an issue that has been faced by other law enforcement agencies across the country; some of those agencies have taken corrective actions with which Chicago has not kept pace. Recognizing the urgency of the issue, the range of solutions potentially available, and the inadequacy of CPD's disciplinary response, OIG recommended that Mayor Brandon Johnson convene a task force comprised of representatives from any appropriate City agency or department, as well as any appropriate community stakeholders, to plan for and implement a comprehensive, whole-of-government approach to preventing, identifying, and eliminating extremist and anti-government activities and associations within CPD.

In a written response attached at Appendix B, the Mayor's Office reports that "the Johnson Administration and the Chicago Police Department remain fully committed to rooting out extremist, anti-government, and biased organizations in our law enforcement ranks. There is no place in the CPD for those who participate in such organizations." The Mayor's Office further says that it is "committed to working with CPD and across departments and agencies to ensure that there is a comprehensive and meaningful approach to preventing, identifying, and eliminating extremist, anti-government, and biased associations within CPD" and says that it will "work with" a variety of entities in this pursuit. OIG appreciates the Mayor's Office's response, but notes that the Mayor's Office neither accepts OIG's recommendation nor commits to any specific action at all.

CPD also provided a written response, though none was required as OIG's recommendation was directed to Mayor Brandon Johnson. Nonetheless, OIG appreciates CPD's response, and it is attached at Appendix C.



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Via Electronic Mail

April 25, 2024

Brandon Johnson
Mayor, City of Chicago
121 N. LaSalle Street, 4th Floor
Chicago, IL 60602

Dear Mayor Johnson:

The City of Chicago Office of Inspector General (OIG) writes to raise concerns about the incidence and handling of allegations that members of the Chicago Police Department (CPD) belong to or associate with extremist and anti-government groups. This is an issue of profound importance and pressing public concern. As CPD and the City work to foster public trust and improve community relationships, the City can ill-afford anything less than a robust, timely, comprehensive strategy to address extremism in the police ranks.

Allegations of extremist activities and associations by CPD members came to OIG's attention by way of our ordinance-mandated review of closed disciplinary investigations conducted by CPD's Bureau of Internal Affairs (BIA). Pursuant to § 2-56-230(c)(ii) of the Municipal Code of Chicago (MCC), OIG's Public Safety section's Investigative Analysis Unit reviews those investigations and may make recommendations to inform and improve future investigations and, upon a finding that an investigation is deficient in such a way that "materially affected the outcome of the investigation," may recommend that it be reopened. Over the last three years, OIG has reviewed several BIA investigations into allegations that CPD members have belonged to or associated with certain extremist and anti-government organizations—specifically, the Proud Boys, the Oath Keepers, and the Three Percenters. In finding material deficiencies in those investigations, OIG has recommended that they be reopened. Even where those investigations were reopened, their final outcomes failed to meet any appropriate standard for swift and clear accountability for conduct which renders CPD members unfit to serve.

How CPD and the City prevent and respond to extremism among CPD members has been an issue of significant and sustained public interest and concern, against the backdrop of a national conversation about similar issues in law enforcement agencies of all sizes. Here in Chicago, the issue has been the subject of extensive press coverage, City Council hearings, and discussion by public officials.¹

OIG notes and appreciates that both you and CPD Superintendent Larry Snelling have made clear and unequivocal public statements of your commitments to addressing the problem. During your

¹ See <https://chicago.suntimes.com/extremism-in-the-ranks> and <https://vimeo.com/showcase/8928579/video/799577363>.

Mayoral campaign, you were quoted as saying that “active involvement in domestic terrorist organizations should be grounds for immediate dismissal” from CPD.² At CPD’s City Council budget hearing in October 2023, Superintendent Snelling said, “It serves the Chicago Police Department in no way, in no way good, to have members amongst our department who are members of hate groups. And we will not tolerate it.”³

In practice, to date, the City’s handling of extremism in its police ranks has fallen short of these commitments. Any ongoing mishandling of the matter puts CPD’s public legitimacy at critical risk, and profoundly undermines its effectiveness by damaging the very public trust that the City and the Department are endeavoring to foster.

An appropriate strategy to prevent, detect, and eliminate extremism within CPD cannot succeed solely within the four walls of the Department; rather, all of the City agencies involved in recruiting, hiring, training, and investigating CPD members; the policy-making authorities in City government; and the appropriate partner entities outside of City government must be joined to the task.

Herein, OIG provides some information on the histories, origins, and ideologies of the extremist and anti-government groups with which CPD members have recently been accused of associating, surveys the national landscape on extremism in law enforcement, and briefly reviews CPD’s handling of recent relevant disciplinary investigations.⁴

I | History, Origins, and Ideology of Certain Anti-Government and Extremist Groups

Certain anti-government and extremist groups with which CPD members have been accused of associating, such as the Proud Boys and Oath Keepers, have increased in both size and visibility in recent years and have come under increased scrutiny following the January 6, 2021 attack on the U.S. Capitol.⁵ Even the histories, origins, and ideologies of these groups, however, obviate any suggestion that CPD members might have joined them with innocent or benign intentions.⁶

² Colin Boyle and Alex Hernandez, “Cop Linked to Proud Boys Should be Fired – Along with Any other Extremist Officers, West Side Leaders Say,” *Block Club Chicago*, January 10, 2023, accessed December 2023, <https://blockclubchicago.org/2023/01/10/cop-linked-to-proud-boys-should-be-fired-along-with-any-other-extremist-officers-west-side-leaders-say>.

³ Heather Cherone, “Top Cop Vows to Rid Chicago Police Department of Officers Tied to Proud Boys, Oath Keepers,” *WTTW*, October 24, 2023, accessed December 2023, <https://news.wttw.com/2023/10/24/top-cop-vows-rid-chicago-police-department-officers-tied-proud-boys-oath-keepers>.

⁴ On November 2, 2023, the Community Commission on Public Safety and Accountability (CCPSA), pursuant to MCC §2-80-050(f), recommended that OIG study “CPD’s processes and practices for identifying and disciplining officers who associate with extremist or bias-based organizations.”

⁵ “Far-right militia group membership surged after Capitol attack, hack shows,” *The Guardian*, October 1, 2021, accessed January 18, 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/oct/01/capitol-attack-oath-keepers-far-right-militia-group>; “Number of Proud Boys Chapters Almost Doubled From 2020 to 2021: Report,” *Newsweek*, March 9, 2022, accessed January 18, 2023, <https://www.newsweek.com/number-proud-boys-chapters-almost-doubled-2020-2021-report-1686510>.

⁶ In a February 2023 hearing before the City Council a CPD official testified that a CPD member who admitted to joining the Oath Keepers had done so simply to “receive articles on the support of the Constitution...He joined Oath Keepers the way it was then...It kind of morphed into something it is today.” Tom Schuba, “‘It’s a joke!’ City Council members grill Chicago police officials about extremists in their ranks,” *Chicago Sun Times*, February 22, 2023, accessed March 21,

Proud Boys

Stanford University's Center for International Security and Cooperation calls the Proud Boys, founded in 2016, "an all-male, far-right extremist organization," and describes it as "Islamophobic, anti-Semitic, homophobic, transphobic, misogynistic, and xenophobic" with an ideology that "includes allegiance to Western culture and stresses elevating masculinity, opposing Islam, and defending its community from a perceived 'war on whites.'"⁷ Since 2021, the Canadian government has listed the Proud Boys as a terrorist entity.⁸ The group was similarly recognized as a terrorist entity by New Zealand in 2022.⁹ The Proud Boys are recognized by the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) as a hate group and the largest entity in the "General Hate" category of ideologies; SPLC describes groups in that category as "embrac[ing] a broad range of bigotries, including misogyny, antisemitism and anti-Black, anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim views."¹⁰ The Proud Boys are further described by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) as "a right-wing extremist group with a violent agenda...Some members espouse white supremacist and antisemitic ideologies and/or engage with white supremacist groups."¹¹

The Proud Boys are self-described "Western chauvinists who refuse to apologize for creating the modern world," who "long for the days when girls were girls and men were men," and were created in response to "politically correct culture."¹² At least as of 2018, their members are reportedly promoted through four membership levels, each of which is reached through a different initiation ritual. The first level involves members taking an oath stating, "I am a Western chauvinist and I refuse to apologize for creating the modern world." The second requires that members are repeatedly punched until they can recite five kinds of breakfast cereals, and the third level requires that members get a Proud Boy tattoo. The fourth level is honorary; it is bestowed upon members who defend the group by "fighting anti-fascists in the streets or getting arrested."¹³

The group's founder, Gavin McInnes, describes the Proud Boys as a "pro-western fraternity" that rejects white nationalism, denies any connection to racism, and is opposed to senseless violence. Notably, however, Proud Boys members participated in the "Unite the Right" rally in Charlottesville,

2024, ["It's a joke!" City Council members grill Chicago police officials about extremists in their ranks - Chicago Sun-Times \(suntimes.com\)](https://www.suntimes.com).

⁷ "MPP: Proud Boys," *Center for International Security and Cooperation*, last updated September, 2023, accessed December 2023, <https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/proud-boys>.

⁸ "Proud Boys," *Public Safety Canada*, accessed December 2023, [Currently listed entities \(publicsafety.gc.ca\)](https://publicsafety.gc.ca). The Proud Boys are described as "a neo-fascist organization that engages in political violence and was formed in 2016. Members of the group espouse misogynistic, Islamophobic, anti-Semitic, anti-immigrant, and/or white supremacist ideologies and associate with white supremacist groups. The Proud Boys consist of semi-autonomous chapters located in the United States (U.S.), Canada, and internationally. The group and its members have openly encouraged, planned, and conducted violent activities against those they perceive to be opposed to their ideology and political beliefs."

⁹ "Designation of Two Terrorist Entities," *New Zealand Gazette*, June 27, 2022, accessed December 2023, [Designation of Two Terrorist Entities - 2022-go2465 - New Zealand Gazette](https://www.gazette.govt.nz).

¹⁰ "General Hate," *Southern Poverty Law Center*, accessed December 2023, <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/ideology/general-hate>.

¹¹ "Proud Boys," *Anti-Defamation League*, November 2, 2018, accessed November 2022, <https://www.adl.org/resources/background/proud-boys-0>.

¹² "Proud Boys," *Anti-Defamation League*, November 2, 2018, accessed November 2022, <https://www.adl.org/resources/background/proud-boys-0>.

¹³ Mike Wendling, "Proud Boys and antifa: When a right-wing activist met a left-wing anti-fascist," *BBC*, March 2019, accessed November 2022, <https://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-trending-47332054>.

Virginia on August 11 and 12, 2017, and in the attack on the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021.¹⁴ While members of the organization certainly may hold and espouse a range of ideologies, the group's national profile going back to its founding is clearly marked by extremism and anti-government views.

The "Unite the Right" rally was a gathering that involved hundreds of extremists, many of whom espoused white supremacist ideals, to protest plans to remove a statue of Confederate General Robert E. Lee. The event was organized by former Proud Boys member Jason Kessler.¹⁵ Confrontations broke out between those protesting the removal of the statue and counter-protesters. The confrontations culminated violently when a vehicle was driven into a crowd of counter-protesters, resulting in the death of one individual and leaving more than a dozen others injured. The night before the clash with counter-protesters, "hundreds of white nationalists marched through the University of Virginia campus while carrying burning torches."¹⁶ The Proud Boys had numerous members attend the rally including Augustus Sol Invictus, "a scheduled speaker at Unite the Right, [who] served as the second-in-command for the Proud Boys' 'tactical defense arm' called the Fraternal Order of Alt-Knights" and Enrique Tarrío, a member of the Fraternal Order of Alt-Knights at the time who later became the chairman of the Proud Boys.¹⁷

The attack on the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021, was a violent protest in response to the election of Joseph R. Biden, Jr. as President of the United States. The Department of Justice (DOJ) describes the activities of those who participated in the attack as constituting "obstructing Congress's certification of the 2020 presidential election results and conspiring to prevent Congress and federal officers from discharging their duties."¹⁸ Attending and participating in the attack of January 6, 2021, were numerous extremist groups, including the Proud Boys. In the aftermath of the event, reports counted 140 police officers injured and three dead.¹⁹ More than 20 members of the Proud Boys were criminally charged in relation to the attack, including two members who were "planning, raising funds and gathering protective gear and radios" in preparation for the attack.²⁰ In May 2023, four Proud Boys leaders, including Tarrío, were convicted of seditious conspiracy for their actions before and during the attack on the Capitol.

¹⁴ "Proud Boys," *Southern Poverty Law Center*, accessed November 2022, <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/group/proud-boys>.

¹⁵ "MPP: Proud Boys," *Center for International Security and Cooperation*, last updated September 2023, accessed December 2023, <https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/proud-boys>.

¹⁶ Andrew Katz, "Charlottesville: 'Unite the Right' Rally, State of Emergency," *TIME*, accessed August, 2023, <https://time.com/charlottesville-white-nationalist-rally-clashes/>.

¹⁷ Hayden, "'Unite the Right' 5 Years Later: Where Are They Now?"

¹⁸ "Jury Convicts Four Leaders of the Proud Boys of Seditious Conspiracy Related to U.S. Capitol Breach," *Office of Public Affairs: U.S. Department of Justice*, accessed December 2023, <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/jury-convicts-four-leaders-proud-boys-seditious-conspiracy-related-us-capitol-breach>.

¹⁹ Tom Jackman, "Police union says 140 officers injured in Capitol riot," *The Washington Post*, January 27, 2021, accessed December 2023, https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/public-safety/police-union-says-140-officers-injured-in-capitol-riot/2021/01/27/60743642-60e2-11eb-9430-e7c77b5b0297_story.html.

²⁰ Tom Dreisbach, "Conspiracy Charges Bring Proud Boys' History of Violence Into Spotlight," *NPR*, April 9, 2021, accessed September 20, 2023, <https://www.npr.org/2021/04/09/985104612/conspiracy-charges-bring-proud-boys-history-of-violence-into-spotlight>.

Oath Keepers

The Oath Keepers is a “pre-eminent organization of the anti-government patriot/militia movement, a type of extremism that considers the federal government to be the greatest threat to American liberty.”²¹ The group was described by DOJ in a federal grand jury indictment as a “large but loosely organized collection of individuals, some of whom are associated with militias” and some of whom “believe that the federal government has been coopted by a cabal of elites actively trying to strip American citizens of their rights.”²² The group “explicitly focus[es] on recruiting current and former military, law enforcement, and first-responder personnel.”²³ Since the group’s founding in 2009, its members have been involved in a number of armed confrontations with government actors throughout the country.²⁴

The “Oath Keepers” moniker “alludes to the oath sworn by members of the military and police to defend the Constitution from all enemies, foreign and domestic. On their website, the Oath Keepers declare they will not obey unconstitutional orders.”²⁵

According to the ADL, the “Oath Keepers have several theories they repeatedly peddle as proof that their ‘constitutional republic’ is being taken over and destroyed by evil forces. These beliefs, which encapsulate the one-world government conspiracy theories that underpin the anti-government movement, stoke paranoia, fan anti-government sentiment, and give [the Oath Keepers] purpose.”²⁶ Among the positions put forward by the Oath Keepers are:

- predicting an impending takeover of the U.S. by the Democratic Party, which they describe as a Marxist-Islamist organization, where an “unholy alliance of communists and jihadists aim to defeat their common enemy – Western Civilization;”
- warning of the imposition of martial law, which they claim will result in the government going door to door and confiscating firearms, banning interstate travel, and detaining citizens in concentration camps; and
- believing that the United Nations is a tool of the New World Order and is trying to undermine the U.S. government by imposing a globalist agenda.²⁷

²¹ “MPP: Oath Keepers,” *Center for International Security and Cooperation*, last updated October 2023, accessed December 2023, <https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/oath-keepers>.

²² *United States v. Rhodes*, (D.D.C. June 22, 2022) (ECF No. 167) No. 22-cr-15, <https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/press-release/file/1462346/download>.

²³ *United States v. Rhodes*, (D.D.C. June 22, 2022) No. 22-cr-15.

²⁴ *United States v. Bundy*, 968 F.3d 1019, 1023-24 (9th Cir. 2020) (describing 2014 incident where Oath Keepers joined with Nevada rancher Cliven Bundy in an armed standoff with federal law enforcement); *United States v. Huff*, 630 F. App’x 471, 474-76, 490-91 (6th Cir. 2015) (affirming federal firearms conviction of Oath Keepers member in connection with a 2010 attempt to take over a Tennessee courthouse to perform citizens’ arrest on local officials for failure indict President Obama on fraud and treason charges) No. 10-10287.

²⁵ *United States v. Rhodes*, (D.D.C. June 22, 2022) No. 22-cr-15.

²⁶ “Oath Keepers,” *Anti-Defamation League*, June 26, 2017, accessed November 2022, <https://www.adl.org/resources/backgrounder/oath-keepers>.

²⁷ “New-World Order” is a “term used to refer to a right-wing conspiracy theory that became popular among anti-government extremists from the 1990s onwards. ‘New World Order’ conspiracists believe that a tyrannical, socialist ‘one-world’ conspiracy has already taken over most of the planet and schemes to eliminate the last bastion of freedom, the United States, with the help of collaborators within the government.” *Anti-Defamation League*, accessed March 15, 2023, <https://extremismterms.adl.org/glossary/new-world-order>.

On the basis of these beliefs, the Oath Keepers have a list of ten orders that they refuse to follow. These are articulated as follows:²⁸

1. We will not obey orders to disarm the American people.
2. We will not obey orders to conduct warrantless searches of the American people.
3. We will not obey orders to detain American citizens as “unlawful enemy combatants” or to subject them to military tribunal.
4. We will not obey orders to impose martial law or a “state of emergency” on a state.
5. We will not obey orders to invade and subjugate any state that asserts its sovereignty.
6. We will not obey any order to blockade American cities, thus turning them into giant concentration camps.
7. We will not obey any order to force American citizens into any form of detention camps under any pretext.
8. We will not obey orders to assist or support the use of any foreign troops on U.S. soil against the American people to “keep the peace” or to “maintain control.”
9. We will not obey any orders to confiscate the property of the American people, including food and other essential supplies.
10. We will not obey any orders which infringe on the right of the people to free speech, to peaceably assemble, and to petition their government for a redress of grievances.

The Oath Keepers played a major role in the January 6, 2021 attack on the U.S. Capitol.²⁹ During the events of that day, an individual was photographed and captured on surveillance video spraying members of the Capitol Police with what was reported to be “bear spray,” while wearing a hat that read “Oath Keepers Lifetime Member.”³⁰ In November 2022, two Oath Keepers leaders including its founder, Elmer Stuart Rhodes III, were convicted of seditious conspiracy as a result of their involvement in the attack on the Capitol. Months later, in January 2023, four more members of the Oath Keepers were convicted of seditious conspiracy and related charges for their participation.³¹

Three Percenters (III%ers)

The ADL describes the Three Percenters (III%ers) as a group of “anti-government extremists who are part of the militia movement. They compare their hostility to the federal government with the opposition of American patriots to the British during the American Revolution.”³² SPLC states,

Three Percenters often draw parallels between the U.S. government today and the British government in the 1700s, arguing that the current U.S government is tyrannical and actively working to infringe on Americans’ Constitutional rights and

²⁸ “Oath Keepers,” *Anti-Defamation League*, June 26, 2017, accessed February 28, 2023, <https://www.adl.org/resources/backgrounder/oath-keepers>.

²⁹ “MPP: Oath Keepers,” *Center for International Security and Cooperation*, last updated October 2023, accessed December 2023, <https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/oath-keepers>.

³⁰ Andy East, “A local connection: Indiana Oath Keepers confirms group in Bartholomew County,” *The Republic*, January 31, 2021, accessed December 2023, <https://www.therepublic.com/2021/01/31/a-local-connection-indiana-oath-keepers-confirms-group-in-bartholomew-county/>

³¹ “Four Oath Keepers Found Guilty of Seditious Conspiracy Related to U.S. Capitol Breach,” *Office of Public Affairs: U.S. Department of Justice*, accessed December 2023, <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/four-oath-keepers-found-guilty-seditious-conspiracy-related-us-capitol-breach>.

³² “Three Percenters,” *Anti-Defamation League*, June 26, 2017, accessed November 2022, <https://www.adl.org/resources/backgrounder/three-percenters>.

liberties. They believe a small force of armed individuals can overthrow a tyrannical government, and many Three Percenters engage in paramilitary training and organizing to do so.³³

A Special Agent assigned to the FBI’s Washington Field Office Joint Terrorism Task Force stated, “While many independent or multi-state militia groups incorporate III% in their unit names, the term is less indicative of membership in a single overarching group than it is representative of a common belief in the notion that a small force (three percent of the population) that is armed and prepared, and with a just cause, can overthrow a perceived tyrannical government.”³⁴

There have been numerous incidents in recent years in which members of the Three Percenters have engaged in criminal, sometimes violent, activities including:

1. The bombing of a mosque in Minnesota in August 2017 and the failed bombing of an abortion clinic in Illinois in November 2017. These led to the arrest in July 2018 of multiple members of the “White Rabbit Three Percent Illinois Patriot Freedom Fighters Militia.”
2. The attempted detonation of a truck bomb in front of a bank in downtown Oklahoma City “as part of a general plan to form militia groups and launch attacks against the government.” The perpetrator, a Three Percenter from Oklahoma, was arrested.
3. A plot by three members of a militia named The Crusaders, an offshoot of the Kansas Three Percenters Security Force, to use truck bombs to destroy an apartment complex housing Muslim immigrants from Somalia. The three militia members received sentences between 25 and 30 years.³⁵

II | Extremism in Law Enforcement

A | The national landscape

The issue of law enforcement officers belonging to or associating with anti-government and extremist groups is not unique to Chicago. Law enforcement—and military—agencies across the country have confronted similar challenges over the last decade. The ADL wrote in 2021,

Extremists within the ranks can have a dangerous and outsized impact on policing in our communities. By associating with extremist movements or publicly expressing support for these ideologies, members of law enforcement are behaving in a way that directly contradicts their oaths to serve and protect our communities and undermines community safety. Some of these extremist beliefs, notably white supremacist ideologies, place vulnerable populations, including Black people and other people of color, as well as immigrant populations, at greater risk of harm.

³³ “Three Percenters,” *Southern Poverty Law Center*, accessed November 2022, <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/group/three-percenters>.

³⁴ “US v Cole, et al, Statement of Facts,” accessed February 28, 2023, <https://wmfeimages.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/25170115/Cole-et-al-statement-of-facts.pdf>.

³⁵ “Three Percenters,” *Anti-Defamation League*, June 26, 2017, accessed November 2022, <https://www.adl.org/resources/background/three-percenters>.

Beyond this erosion of trust, the presence of extremists among law enforcement officers also poses tactical challenges. For one, police officers are often privy to sensitive – and in rare cases classified – information that extremists could use to advance their agenda or even to disrupt an investigation.

Extremists do not exist in a vacuum. If a white supremacist is serving within an agency, that person's decisions and views will inevitably affect their coworkers, eroding trust between officers and compromising safety for all.³⁶

Also in 2021, the Major Cities Chiefs Association (MCCA), an association of police executives representing the largest American and Canadian cities, released a statement on extremism which was signed by more than four dozen police executives from cities including Houston, Minneapolis, Seattle, Baltimore, and Los Angeles. It said:

As police officers, we are given extraordinary trust and authority by the communities we serve and by the law. We enjoy the same rights as all other Americans; including freedom of speech and freedom of expression, however, because of our chosen profession, there are limitations to these rights.

First and foremost, officers who subscribe to violent extremism, racism, sexism and hate have no place in our profession. When officers with that mindset are identified, swift action must be taken. As leaders of agencies tasked with the safety and security of the diverse communities we serve, we have made it abundantly clear that there is zero room, not only in society, but more so in professions of public service, for people to have extremist views, regardless of ideology. Wearing a badge is a privilege, not a right, and we must all stand together to keep out, and weed out, anyone who would subscribe to views inconsistent with the values expected of the members within our ranks.

Police officers must be more thoughtful than other professions about what organizations they join, what opinions they express and how they express them. A police officer is expected to be unaffected by politics and unbiased in how they perform their duty, make decisions, and even testify under oath. To our friends and neighbors, and yes, to our critics, we are expected to set the standard for what exemplary, unbiased, conduct should look like.³⁷

CPD is a member of MCCA, but was not among the signatories to the statement.

The federal government has also recognized the rise of, and threat posed by, extremism in law enforcement. In 2022, President Biden issued an executive order which, among other things, required the Office of Personnel Management to convene a working group comprised of heads of federal law enforcement agencies whose charge included to:

³⁶ "Extremism in American Law Enforcement: Far Greater Transparency, Accountability Needed," *Anti-Defamation League*, June 3, 2021, accessed December 2023, <https://www.adl.org/resources/report/extremism-american-law-enforcement-far-greater-transparency-accountability-needed>.

³⁷ *Major Cities Chiefs Association*, February 19, 2023, accessed December 2023, <https://majorcitieschiefs.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/MCCA-Open-Letter-Extremist-Ideology.pdf>.

develop best practices for conducting background investigations and implementing properly validated selection procedures, including vetting mechanisms and ongoing employment screening, that, consistent with the First Amendment and all applicable laws, help avoid the hiring and retention of law enforcement officers who promote unlawful violence, white supremacy, or other bias against persons based on race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sex (including sexual orientation and gender identity), or disability.³⁸

The Department of Defense (DOD) has addressed similar concerns in the military context. While military organizations are distinct and different from law enforcement agencies like CPD, there may be observations and practices that are transferable among armed, chain-of-command organizations. DOD has issued guidance stating that “[e]xtremist activities are inconsistent with the responsibilities and obligations of military service, as well as oaths of office and enlistment, and can be prohibited even in some circumstances in which such activities would be constitutionally protected in a civilian setting.” The guidance notes that participation in extremist activities “undermines morale and reduces combat readiness,” and “damages the Nation’s trust and confidence in [DOD] as an institution and the military as a professional fighting force.”³⁹

B | Disciplining police officers for anti-government and extremist activities and associations

Over the last decade, law enforcement agencies, throughout the country have grappled with allegations that members of their agencies belonged to or associated with anti-government and extremist groups. Despite the attendant challenges, large and small police departments have successfully investigated and disciplined members engaged in or associated with extremism. Examples include the following:

- In 2013, a group of officers in the Jersey City Police Department’s (New Jersey) Emergency Services Unit called themselves “Three Percenters” and wore patches on their uniforms signaling their members in the group. The department confirmed publicly that officers were disciplined as a result.⁴⁰
- In 2016, an Anne Arundel County Police (Maryland) officer was suspended after a picture of an Oath Keepers hat inside a police vehicle was taken by a member of the public and shared with the Department. Chief Timothy Altomare was quoted as saying, in response to the incident, “Good Lord, it’s 2016. Every one of my cops should know better.”⁴¹
- In 2018, a deputy of the Plaquemines Parish Sheriff’s Office (Louisiana) was fired for describing himself as a member of the Proud Boys on his social media page and for a video he posted online in which he stated, “I’m a proud Western chauvinist who refuses to

³⁸ “Executive Order on Advancing Effective, Accountable Policing and Criminal Justice Practices to Enhance Public Trust and Public Safety,” *The White House*, May 25, 2022, accessed December 2023, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2022/05/25/executive-order-on-advancing-effective-accountable-policing-and-criminal-justice-practices-to-enhance-public-trust-and-public-safety/>.

³⁹ “Handling Protest, Extremist, and Criminal Gang Activities Among Members of the Armed Forces,” *Department of Defense*, December 20, 2021, accessed December 2023, <https://www.esd.whs.mil/Portals/54/Documents/DD/issuances/dodi/132506p.PDF>.

⁴⁰ “Jersey City police brass identify a pro-militia clique in the department and say they’ve been stopped,” *NJ.com*, April 29, 2013, accessed December 2023, <https://www.nj.com/ijournal-news/2013/04/jersey-city-police-brass-ident.html>.

⁴¹ Saliqa Khan, “Anne Arundel County police officer suspended after ‘Oath Keepers’ hat seen in cruiser,” *WBAL TV*, October 19, 2016, accessed November 2022, <https://www.wbalv.com/article/anne-arundel-county-police-officer-suspended-after-oath-keepers-hat-seen-in-cruiser/7148735>.

apologize for creating the modern world.” The Plaquemines Parish Sheriff, Gerald Turlich, stated that the deputy’s decision to promote his ties to the Proud Boys on at least one social media page showing him in his agency uniform had “inevitably affected the public trust bestowed upon him” and that the values of the Proud Boys were contradictory to those of the Sheriff’s Office. Turlich said his office “does not support the organization or its ideals, and law enforcement in general has an obligation to treat all people equally, fairly and impartially.”⁴²

- In 2021, an officer employed by the Fresno Police Department (California) was identified among a group of Proud Boys who rallied at a demonstration in support of Donald Trump that “devolved into violence.” The officer was fired and the Fresno Police Department Chief, Paco Balderrama, stated that he disapproved of any police officer affiliating themselves with violent or hateful groups and that “such ideology, behavior and affiliations have no place in law enforcement and will not be tolerated within the ranks of the Fresno community.”⁴³

These examples powerfully demonstrate that law enforcement agencies can, in fact, commit to disciplining their members for extremist and anti-government activities and associations.

III | Extremism in the Chicago Police Department

Unlike some of its counterparts on the national landscape, and in contrast to its own historical position, CPD has not in recent years taken an aggressive approach to disciplining its members for associating with or belonging to extremist and anti-government groups. OIG has repeatedly found investigations conducted by CPD’s BIA into extremism-related allegations to be materially deficient. CPD has declined to apply existing rules and policies to extremism allegations, despite those existing rules and policies serving to prohibit the conduct at issue and despite CPD having historically applied those same rules as far back as the 1960s. Meanwhile, the Community Commission for Public Safety and Accountability (CCPSA) has intervened to craft new policies in an effort to address extremism in CPD’s ranks.⁴⁴

A | CPD policy landscape

Membership in or association with extremist or anti-government groups violates long-standing CPD rules and policies and is fundamentally contrary to CPD’s stated goals and objectives. That is, the organizing principles and guiding ideologies of these groups are profoundly inconsistent with CPD’s mission, its Standard of Conduct, and its rules.

⁴² Ramon Antonio Vargas, “Plaquemines deputy tied to far-right group Proud Boys has been fired by sheriff’s office,” *nola.com*, August 16, 2018, accessed November 2022, https://www.nola.com/news/crime_police/article_62cd0ccb-b4ac-5e49-9661-532550f5aa26.html.

⁴³ Hannah Knowles, “California police fire officer who was a Proud Boy, saying they have no tolerance for hate groups,” *The Washington Post*, April 11, 2021, accessed November 2022, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2021/04/11/fresno-rick-fitzgerald-proud-boys/>.

⁴⁴ City of Chicago Community Commission for Public Safety and Accountability, “Amendments to G08-03 – Prohibitions on Criminal and Biased Based Organizations (formerly titled “Prohibition on Associations with Criminal Organizations),” January 13, 2023, accessed March 21, 2023, [City of Chicago: Amendments to G08-03 – Prohibitions on Criminal and Biased Based Organizations \(formerly titled “Prohibition on Associations with Criminal Organizations\).](https://www.cityofchicago.org/files/assets/documents/Amendments_to_G08-03_-_Prohibitions_on_Criminal_and_Biased_Based_Organizations_(formerly_titled_“Prohibition_on_Associations_with_Criminal_Organizations”).pdf)

CPD's Standard of Conduct, in part, states,

A police officer is the most conspicuous representative of government, and to the majority of the people he is a symbol of stability and authority upon whom they can rely. An officer's conduct is closely scrutinized, and when his actions are found to be excessive, unwarranted or unjustified he, and the Department, are criticized far [sic] more severely than comparable conduct of persons in other walks of life. Since the conduct of a member, on or off duty, does reflect directly upon the Department, a member must at all times conduct himself in a manner which does not bring discredit to himself, the Department or the city.

As well as,

As one of the world's largest cities, Chicago is composed of many different communities, each with its own lifestyle and customs and each with its own crime problems. The cosmopolitan nature of the City is manifested by the diverse ethnic and sociological background of its people. However, all persons in each area of the city share the common need of protection and service which is afforded by fair and impartial law enforcement. In addition, as a person moves throughout the City, he must be able to expect a similar police response to his behavior wherever it occurs. When the law is not evenly and fairly enforced, there follows a reduction in respect for the law and resistance to its enforcement.

CPD members' association with extremist or anti-government groups is irreconcilable with CPD's rules and critically destructive to its legitimacy. Most specifically, association with these groups violates Rules 2 and 3 of CPD's Rule of Conduct. Rule 2 prohibits "any action or conduct which impedes the Department's efforts to achieve its policy and goals or brings discredit upon the Department." The comment to Rule 2 clarifies,

This Rule applies to both the professional and private conduct of all members. It prohibits any and all conduct which is contrary to the letter and spirit of Departmental policy or goals or which would reflect adversely upon the Department or its members. It includes not only all unlawful acts by members but also all acts, which although not unlawful in themselves, would degrade or bring disrespect upon the member or the Department, including public and open association with persons of known bad or criminal reputation in the community unless such association is in the performance of police duties. It also includes any action contrary to the stated policy, goals, rules, regulations, orders, or directives of the Department.⁴⁵

Furthermore, Rule 3 prohibits "any failure to promote the Department's efforts to implement its policy or accomplish its goals," and specifically "any omission or failure to act by any member of the Department, whether on or off duty, which act would be required by the stated policy, goals, rules, regulations, orders and directives of the Department."

The ideologies of these groups, including but not limited to an allegiance to western culture and stressing chauvinistic principles, opposing Islam, and defending against a so-called "war on

⁴⁵ Chicago Police Department, "Rules and Regulations of the Chicago Police Department," April 16, 2015, accessed November 2022, <https://directives.chicagopolice.org/#directive/public/6412>.

whites,” directly conflict with Rule 2. Adherence to any of these ideologies degrades CPD and is contrary to the letter and spirit of CPD policy and goals.

In November 2023, CCPSA approved an amendment to CPD Policy G08-03: Prohibitions on Associations with Criminal Organizations. CCPSA was created in July 2021 when the Chicago City Council passed an ordinance “creating a new model for police oversight, accountability, and public safety.”⁴⁶ CCPSA’s powers include setting CPD policy by drafting, reviewing, and approving by majority vote any new or amended CPD general order.

Prior to the vote on the amended CPD policy regarding G08-03, CCPSA solicited feedback from the community. According to CCPSA there were “several themes” identified by the community. Such identified themes included:

- whether the term bias was appropriate and specific enough,
- whether the order should directly reference white supremacy and/or racism,
- whether the policy was specific enough to ensure that officers could still engage in organizations working to end discrimination and promote racial and gender-based equity,
- suggestions that the policy should include monitoring and accountability measures,
- direction on how CPD would publicize and share a list of prohibited organizations, and
- making sure the policy sufficiently protects member’s first amendment rights.

The final approved policy states in part that

Active participation or membership in, or affiliation with, criminal or biased organizations, or association with known members of criminal or biased organizations is inconsistent with the oath administered to all sworn Department members and interferes with the mission of the Department to fairly and impartially enforce the law, maintain public order, serve our communities, and protect the lives, rights, and property of all people in Chicago.⁴⁷

Beyond its profound incompatibility with any effort to build community trust in CPD, allegiance to any extremist or anti-government group plainly renders a police officer unable to meet their obligations. Law enforcement officers are charged with enforcing the law. They cannot belong to groups, such as the Oath Keepers for example, which hold the notion that members might refuse any order received in the course of their duty. A police officer cannot uphold the law and the Constitution and work in partnership with federal law enforcement agencies—as CPD members are called upon to do—if they belong to a group adhering to a belief that the federal government is tyrannical and actively working to infringe on Americans’ Constitutional rights and liberties. An officer, whose basic duties include interacting with and providing unbiased service to a broadly diverse population, cannot espouse an ideology, such as the Proud Boys’, that elevates masculinity, opposes Islam, and imagines itself defending against a “war on whites.”

⁴⁶ City of Chicago Community Commission for Public Safety and Accountability, “What is the Community Commission?,” accessed January 5, 2024, https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/depts/ccpsa/supp_info/community-commission.html.

⁴⁷ Chicago Police Department, “General Order G-08-03: Prohibitions on Criminal and Biased Organizations,” September 3, 2023, accessed January 5, 2024, <https://www.chicago.gov/content/dam/city/depts/ccpsa/policies/CPD%27s-Sep-2023-Updates-to-Draft-Amendments-to-G08-03.pdf>.

B | CPD's historical handling of disciplinary cases

More than half a century ago, CPD initiated an investigation into the alleged memberships of multiple CPD members in the Ku Klux Klan (KKK). One such member was Officer Donald Heath, the admitted grand dragon of the KKK in Illinois at the time. The investigation covertly utilized an active CPD Officer to “infiltrate the Klan cell by cozying up to Heath,” as requested by a Deputy Superintendent. The covert officer was assigned to patrol with Heath and testified that, within three weeks of the assignment Heath asked, “if I was interested in joining a club comprised of other police members of the Chicago Police Department.” Soon after, the covert officer paid a \$15 initiation fee, took the oath of allegiance to the KKK, and was inducted into the KKK by Heath.

During Heath's disciplinary hearing, CPD Lieutenant Mooney, stated to Heath after he refused to answer questions about the KKK that,

As a police officer, he took an oath to uphold the Constitution of the United States, the Constitution of the State of Illinois and the ordinances of the City of Chicago, and that there was an ordinance of the City of Chicago that established an individual, who is known as the Superintendent of Police, who is the Commanding Officer of the Police Department and who both he and I are duty bound to follow orders issued either by him or through him.⁴⁸

During the same hearing, City of Chicago Department of Law attorney Jerome Zurla stated that the KKK is “an organization which repels the very nature of the fact that a police officer must cooperate with his own Department, with his superior officers. It was impossible for Patrolman Heath to cooperate.” Zurla further noted, “I think it is incongruous for the Board to believe that he can be a Klansman with robes one minute and a patrolman with his star and his gun the next.”⁴⁹

In the Police Board's findings, they found Heath and two other CPD members violated Rule 2 by being associated with an extremist group, the KKK, and fired them.⁵⁰

C | CPD's recent handling of disciplinary cases

BIA has recently conducted multiple investigations regarding allegations that certain CPD members belonged to or associated with extremist or anti-government groups. OIG has reviewed a number of these investigations pursuant to MCC § 2-56-230(c), pursuant to its power to review CPD “disciplinary investigations, and to make findings and recommendations based on those findings...[and] if it finds a deficiency that it concludes materially affected the outcome of the investigation, recommend that the investigation be reopened.”

CPD's disciplinary investigations have been marked by an apparent reticence to apply existing rules to extremism allegations, despite historical precedent for doing so and the plain language of the rules. In a departure from 50-year-old precedent, CPD has taken the affirmative position that “memberships into organizations in itself is not a rule violation.”⁵¹

⁴⁸ Chicago Police Board, Case No. 274, February 23, 1968, pg. 179, accessed March 27, 2024.

⁴⁹ Chicago Police Board, Case No. 274, February 23, 1968, pg. 399 to 400, accessed March 27, 2024.

⁵⁰ Dan Mihalopoulos, “What Chicago police did when the ku klux klan infiltrated its ranks,” *Chicago Sun-Times*, October 23, 2023, accessed December 2023, <https://chicago.suntimes.com/2023/10/23/23912008/chicago-police-kkk-crackdown>.

⁵¹ Chicago Police Department Bureau of Internal Affairs, “Supplemental Closing Report”, Log # 2021-0004419, dated 27 September 2022.

Proud Boys

OIG reviewed a BIA investigation into allegations that a CPD member failed to submit a written report explaining that he was under investigation after he was interviewed by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). The interview with the FBI regarded his involvement in the Proud Boys, and his association with Proud Boys members who had felony and misdemeanor convictions. BIA, in its allegations, described the Proud Boys as “an organization labeled by the Federal Bureau of Investigations as an anti-semitic [sic], white supremacy organization.”⁵² BIA sustained one allegation, that the member failed to submit a written report explaining that he was under investigation by the FBI and recommended a five-day suspension. BIA did not sustain the allegations that the accused member associated or fraternized with persons known to have been convicted of any felony or misdemeanor. BIA did not allege or analyze potential violations of Rule 2 or 3.

On November 19, 2020, OIG recommended that BIA reopen the investigation to fully account for all available evidence, indicating that the evidence available in BIA’s investigative file may have supported a sustained finding for the remaining allegations. OIG also noted that it appeared that the accused CPD member may have made inconsistent statements to the FBI and BIA, and brought discredit upon CPD by virtue of his involvement with the Proud Boys. OIG recommended that BIA reopen the investigation to reconsider its findings as to the original allegations, potential violations of CPD Rules of Conduct including Rule 2, prohibiting any action or conduct which impedes the Department’s efforts to achieve its policy and goals or brings discredit upon the Department; Rule 14, making a false report, written or oral; and Rule 21, failure to report promptly to the Department any information concerning a crime or other unlawful action.⁵³

BIA accepted OIG’s recommendation to reopen its investigation. Upon doing so, BIA brought five additional allegations against the CPD member. The additional allegations included that:

1. The accused member made a “contradicting statement” during his audio-recorded statement to BIA when asked “when was the last time you posted anything in that group chat ‘Fuck Antifa?’” The member responded, “just that one time, I recall leaving the group once I found out who the Proud Boys were.” From open media source documents, however, it appears the member participated in several discussions between June 2019 and July 2019 in a Proud Boys group chat titled “Fuck Antifa” and “D-FENCE Squad”; and
2. The accused member made a “false statement” when asked during his BIA interview if he attended a Proud Boy-sponsored barbeque, to which the member replied, “I didn’t know there was a Proud Boy barbeque.” This statement contradicted open media source documents where another individual posted on the D-Fence social platform, “[Accused Member] nobody knew you were invited, I think they’re just grasping at straws.”

During the pendency of the reopened investigation, the accused CPD member entered into a mediation agreement with CPD in which he agreed to not contest the allegations of misconduct. He also accepted a 120-day suspension for violating Rule 2, “any action or conduct which impedes the Department’s efforts to achieve its policy and goals or brings discredit upon the Department.”

⁵² Chicago Police Department Bureau of Internal Affairs, Summary Report of Investigation Log #2020-0001998,” July 31, 2020, accessed September 20, 2023, <https://complaints.blob.core.usgovcloudapi.net/reports/2020-0001998.pdf>.

⁵³ Chicago Police Department, “Rules and Regulations of the Chicago Police Department,” April 16, 2015, accessed November 2022, <https://directives.chicagopolice.org/#directive/public/6412>.

Oath Keepers

In 2022, OIG reviewed a BIA investigation into allegations of a CPD member's involvement with the Oath Keepers. These allegations were first reported by National Public Radio (NPR) after the accused CPD member's name was found on a leaked Oath Keepers membership list.⁵⁴ The accused member's LinkedIn profile also claimed affiliation with the Oath Keepers. During the member's interview with BIA, he admitted to being a former member of the Oath Keepers while an active CPD member. He stated that he joined the Oath Keepers in 2010 or 2011 and was a member for three to four years.⁵⁵

BIA reached a finding of Not Sustained on the allegation that the accused member was a member of a "far-right terror group," determining that no evidence existed that the accused officer committed any misconduct on duty. However, BIA's analysis failed to acknowledge that relevant CPD rules explicitly apply to both on- and off-duty conduct.⁵⁶ Additionally, BIA's analysis did not consider whether the officer's membership in the Oath Keepers, by itself, constituted a violation of CPD policy.

OIG recommended that BIA reopen the investigation to conduct any necessary additional investigative activity including, but not limited to, re-interviewing the accused member to determine what, if any, rules, regulations, or policies of CPD he refused to obey because he believed them to be illegal or unconstitutional according to the precepts of the Oath Keepers. OIG also recommended that BIA conduct and document an appropriate analysis of whether the accused member's membership in the Oath Keepers violated any of the Department's Rules and Regulations, including but not limited to Rules 2 and 3.

BIA accepted OIG's recommendation and reopened its investigation. After meeting with OIG to discuss the case, BIA reclosed the investigation leaving its original findings unchanged. As described in a supplementary closing report, CPD "mentioned that memberships into organizations in itself is not a rule violation," and declined to find a violation of CPD General Order G08-03.⁵⁷

Three Percenters

On June 8, 2020, CBS News Chicago reported that a "Chicago Police officer wore a mask bearing the logo of a right-wing militia group known as the 'Three Percenters' while on duty at a downtown protest..." The article provided still images of a uniformed CPD member wearing a black face mask bearing the Three Percenters logo. CBS News received a statement from the (ADL) Midwest

⁵⁴ Odette Yousef, Tom Dreisbach, George Joseph, Huo Jingnan, Micah Loewinger, "Active-duty police in major U.S. cities appear on purported Oath Keepers rosters," *NPR*, November 5, 2021, accessed November 2022, <https://www.npr.org/2021/11/05/1052098059/active-duty-police-in-major-u-s-cities-appear-on-purported-oath-keepers-rosters>.

⁵⁵ Chicago Police Department Bureau of Internal Affairs, "Summary Report of Investigation Log #2021-0004419," April 28, 2022.

⁵⁶ As discussed above, CPD's Rule 2 prohibits "any action or conduct which impedes the Department's efforts to achieve its policy and goals or brings discredit upon the Department." It "applies to both the professional and private conduct of all members." Rule 3 prohibits "any failure to promote the Department's efforts to implement its policy or accomplish its goals," and specifically "any omission or failure to act by any member of the Department, whether on or off duty, which act would be required by the stated policy, goals, rules, regulations, orders and directives of the Department.

⁵⁷ Chicago Police Department, "General Order G08-03: Prohibition on Associations with Criminal Organizations," January 25, 1997, accessed September 20, 2023, <http://directives.chicagopolice.org/#directive/public/6192>.

Regional Director David Goldenberg. According to the article, Goldenberg states, the “Three Percenters are a wing of the anti-government movement, some of whom have engaged in violence in the past. We [ADL] call on the Chicago Police Department to immediately investigate this matter and take corrective measures.” According to a CPD spokesperson, “Members are prohibited from participating in any political activity while on duty or when in uniform, including wearing or displaying political paraphernalia. The Department has launched an investigation into this matter.”⁵⁸

CPD’s recent application of Rule 2 to a member’s associations

CPD has recently applied Rule 2 to a member’s association with a group—specifically, a street gang—undermining any suggestion that it is unable to do so. In August 2023, a CPD Lieutenant recommended termination of a CPD Recruit for using “street gang terminology” in violation of Rule 2 and Rule 6- “Disobedience of an order or directive, whether written or oral.”⁵⁹ “In less than two weeks after being hired by CPD, the request was granted and the Recruit was separated from the Chicago Police Department.”⁶⁰

It was alleged that the CPD Recruit, while standing in formation in a hallway at CPD’s Education and Training Division, stated, “on BD, y’all gonna make me bug up in this bitch. I’m trying to hold this hood shit in but y’all bringing it out on me on BD,” after allegedly being bumped into by another recruit and their duffle bag. The CPD Lieutenant in their termination request wrote that they were aware of the phrase “On BD” to be “common street gang terminology used by members of the Black Disciples street gang to swear upon their allegiance to said gang...”⁶¹

III | Recommendations

The City must take a definitive and unequivocal position against extremism within its police ranks. CPD must be equipped and encouraged to aggressively investigate allegations that its members belong to or associate with extremist or anti-government groups. However, a robust disciplinary response alone is not enough. Rather, the City should identify and exploit each opportunity to prevent, identify, and root out extremist and anti-government associations and activities among CPD members.

On the national landscape, law enforcement agencies and policy organizations have proposed or implemented measures that might provide useful examples. For example, the Springfield Police Department (Illinois), has added new questions to its background interview process for prospective hires which ask whether applicants have:

- belonged to, financially supported, or received monetary funds from any private persons, groups, movements, organizations, or associations, private or not, that hold the belief or support the writings of racial, ethnic, religious, or sexual orientation inferiority;

⁵⁸ Chris Hacker, “CPD Investigating After Officer Wore Extremist Militia Logo to Downtown Protest Saturday,” *CBS*, June 8, 2020, accessed November 2022, <https://www.cbsnews.com/chicago/news/cpd-investigating-after-officer-wore-extremist-militia-logo-to-downtown-protest-saturday/>.

⁵⁹ Chicago Police Department, “Rules and Regulations of the Chicago Police Department,” April 16, 2015, accessed March 20, 2024, <https://directives.chicagopolice.org/#directive/public/6412>.

⁶⁰ Bureau of Internal Affairs, Log #2023-0003679, Investigative Closing Report p. 6.

⁶¹ Civilian Office of Police Accountability, “Summary Report of Investigation Log #2023-0003679, February 26, 2024.

- helped distribute, teach, or recruit with or buy and/or distribute merchandise for or from any private persons, groups, movements, organizations, or associations that hold the belief through bylaws, activities, meetings, writing, social media platforms, online websites or teaching, online or in person anywhere, that accept or support the belief of racial, ethnic, religious or sexual orientation inferiority; or
- attended any events, marches, or meetings held by private persons, groups, organizations, or associations that are of the belief or support any racial, ethnic, religious, or sexual orientation as inferior.⁶²

Elsewhere, Washington state lawmakers have enacted legislation requiring police departments “to inquire into police candidates’ ties to extremist groups and allows the state to revoke their certification if they are affiliated with those organizations.”⁶³

From a policy perspective, ADL has issued a set of recommendations specifically for state and local law enforcement agencies, which include:

- Background checks “on potentially violent extremist connections for individuals applying for law enforcement positions. These background checks should be *periodically repeated on current members* to ensure extremist activity has not become a concern.” (Emphasis added.)
- An agency’s code of conduct “should stress the inherent dangers of violent extremism and address the importance of disavowing violent extremist activity and violent extremist ideology.” Further, agencies “should consider periodic re-swearing of the oath of office and include a potential education component focusing on the importance of the oath and why violent extremism is harmful to the law enforcement profession.”
- Agencies should “consider requiring educational training and professional development on extremism for all law enforcement officials.” ADL notes that “[s]ome law enforcement officers may not recognize the signs that a fellow law enforcement officer may harbor violent extremist beliefs, particularly where indicators of extremism—tattoos and other symbols, coded phrasing, etc.—can be subtle.”
- Agencies should “be transparent with the results of any potential disciplinary matters involving officials that relate to findings that show violent extremist activity.” ADL states that “[g]iving the public information about how an extremist-related disciplinary matter was handled will give communities an understanding that their law enforcement agency is taking these matters seriously and addressing them in a timely and forthcoming [manner], recognizing a shared goal of preventing extremism within the ranks.”
- State and local governments should “create a pathway for law enforcement agencies to receive funding or grants for the specific purpose of increasing resources with respect to

⁶² Sean Crawford and Maureen Foertsch McKinney, “Springfield Police Department releases report on former officer,” *NPR Illinois*, November 9, 2023, accessed December 2023, <https://www.nprillinois.org/equity-justice/2022-11-09/springfield-police-department-releases-report-on-former-officer>.

⁶³ Hassan Kanu, “Prevalence of white supremacists in law enforcement demands drastic change,” *Reuters*, May 12, 2022, accessed December 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/legal/government/prevalence-white-supremacists-law-enforcement-demands-drastic-change-2022-05-12/>.

extremism, including background checks, as well as educational training opportunities for those tasked with vetting potential candidates.”⁶⁴

These examples are not necessarily a roadmap or a checklist, but they do make clear that there are opportunities across areas and processes—hiring, training, budget planning, policymaking, misconduct investigations, etc.—to combat extremism and anti-government associations and activities within CPD. The City must plan and coordinate across the many entities that touch those—and other—areas and processes. Those entities might include City departments that work alongside CPD, including the Office of Public Safety Administration and the Police Board. They might include partners in state and local government, including other law enforcement agencies. They might include policymakers, including elected officials, the City Council’s Committees on Public Safety and on Police and Fire, and the CCPSA.

Accordingly, OIG recommends that the Mayor’s Office convene a task force comprised of representatives from any appropriate City agency or department, as well as any appropriate community stakeholders, to plan for and implement a comprehensive, whole-of-government approach to preventing, identifying, and eliminating extremist and anti-government activities and associations within CPD. Any such task force should make regular public reports on its activities.

Please contact me at (773) 491-7506 or trichardson@igchicago.org should you have any questions about this matter. Please send your response to this letter by May 28, 2024. OIG looks forward to your response, which will be published with this letter.

Respectfully,



Tobara Richardson
Deputy Inspector General for Public Safety
Office of Inspector General

cc: Deborah Witzburg, Inspector General, OIG
Nathaniel Wackman, General Counsel, OIG
Samuel Chae, Associate General Counsel for Public Safety, OIG
Garien Gatewood, Deputy Mayor for Community Safety, Office of the Mayor
Superintendent Larry Snelling, CPD
Anthony Driver, President, CCPSA
Alderman Christopher Taliaferro, Chair, City Council Committee on Police and Fire
Alderman Brian Hopkins, Chair, City Council Committee on Public Safety

⁶⁴ “Extremism in American Law Enforcement: Far Greater Transparency, Accountability Needed,” *Anti-Defamation League*, June 3, 2021, accessed December 2023, <https://www.adl.org/resources/report/extremism-american-law-enforcement-far-greater-transparency-accountability-needed>.



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

Dear Deputy Inspector General Richardson,

Thank you for the important work done by your Office, including the recent report on the handling of allegations that members of the Chicago Police Department (CPD) belong to or associate with extremist, anti-government, or biased groups. Genuine accountability with clear consequences for activities that are contrary to the mission and goals of the Department is critical to CPD's ability to serve the community and build public trust. The Johnson Administration and the Chicago Police Department remain fully committed to rooting out extremist, anti-government, and biased organizations in our law enforcement ranks. There is no place in the CPD for those who participate in such organizations.

As is noted in your report, CPD worked with the Community Commission for Public Safety and Accountability (CCPSA) over the course of 2023 to draft, revise, and finalize changes to CPD's general order related to extremist, anti-government, and biased organizations, strengthening the purpose and policies of the general order and expanding and clarifying the definition of criminal organizations. During this collaborative process, CCPSA provided clear public summaries of the relevant policies; met with subject matter experts as well as police unions and members; and solicited community feedback online, at District Council meetings, at public webinars, and through a targeted listening session. These amendments were unanimously approved by the Commission in November 2023 and implemented by CPD in January 2024. After the issuance of the updated policy, CCPSA continued to work with CPD to gather additional feedback from both CPD and the community. Additional amendments to the general order to further clarify the definitions and enhance reporting and transparency were unanimously approved by the Commission in April 2024 and implemented by CPD in June. CCPSA will continue to solicit feedback, and the online community feedback form remains open to provide input on the policy and implementation. The same public, collaborative process will be followed to inform any further changes to these policies.

These policies set a standard that guides the CPD and underlies the City's approach to these important issues. However, we recognize that these issues cannot be handled solely through policies and general orders. Recruiting, hiring, professional development and education, and processes around misconduct investigations and accountability must all align to support these policies and values. My office is committed to working with CPD and across departments and agencies to ensure that there is a comprehensive and meaningful approach to preventing, identifying, and eliminating extremist, anti-government, and biased associations within CPD. The Mayor's Office of Community Safety will work with CPD, CCPSA, the Office of Public Safety Administration, the Department of Human Resources, the Office of Equity and Racial Justice, and other relevant partners and agencies to ensure that this multi-faceted work is effectively coordinated and informed by best practices, the experiences of other agencies and jurisdictions, and the continuing input of the community.



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



We cannot expect to earn the public trust if we do not hold ourselves accountable. Thank you again for your important work, and we look forward to continuing to work together to improve City government and community safety for the people we serve.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Garien Gatewood", written over a horizontal line.

Deputy Mayor of Community Safety Garien Gatewood



Brandon Johnson
Mayor

Department of Police · City of Chicago
3510 S. Michigan Avenue · Chicago, Illinois 60653

Larry Snelling
Superintendent of Police

June 28, 2024

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

Ms. Tobar Richardson (TRichardson@igchicago.org)
Deputy Inspector General for Public Safety
City of Chicago Office of Inspector General
740 N. Sedgwick, Suite 200
Chicago, Illinois 60654

Re: . Response to Advisory Regarding CPD Member Affiliation with Anti-Government and Extremist Groups

Dear Deputy Inspector General Richardson:

The Chicago Police Department ("CPD") writes in response to the Office of Inspector General's ("OIG") April 2, 2024, advisory about how the CPD handles allegations that its members belong to or associate with extremist or anti-government groups. This arose after an incident involving CPD members being named as alleged members of an extremist organization. A thorough investigation conducted by the CPD's Bureau of Internal Affairs (BIA) found no evidence that any of the eight officers whose names appeared on a leaked Oath Keepers membership list actively participated in that group. Based on the available evidence and interviews with the accused members, BIA determined that none of the accused members actively participated in or attended Oath Keepers events. Therefore, the allegations were not sustained.

As detailed in CPD directives and General Order G08-03, Prohibitions on Criminal and Biased Organizations, the Department prohibits Department members from actively participating in or belonging to criminal or biased organizations and from interacting with known members of criminal or biased organizations. The Department remains fully committed to upholding these guidelines and policies.

In January 2023, CPD sought to strengthen the purpose and policies of General Order G08-03 by amending the prohibition on associations with criminal organizations to expand and clarify the definition of criminal organizations. The amended definition explicitly included groups that practice or support terrorism and groups that practice or support illegal discrimination and prejudice. CPD collaborated with the Community Commission for Public Safety and Accountability (CCPSA) to draft, revise, and finalize these changes. Throughout 2023, CCPSA made comments and suggestions to the drafted amendments to G08-03. In September 2023, CPD responded to these proposed changes with an updated draft of its amendments to G08-03 and continued to work collaboratively with CCPSA to finalize these amendments. On November 13, 2023, the Commission unanimously voted to approve the amended G08-03 policy, Prohibitions on Criminal and Biased Organizations, which was implemented by CPD on January 12, 2024. CPD and CCPSA continued working on additional amendments to further clarify the definitions, including adding the stated mission or goals of an organization as criteria to consider when designating an organization as biased, and adding a section on reporting and transparency. This updated version of G08-03 was issued on June 24, 2024.

CPD also supports the OIG's recommendation that the City involve other City Departments in the planning and coordination of CPD's hiring, training, and policymaking practices in order to investigate thoroughly any misconduct allegations against Department members who actively participate in or belong to criminal or biased organizations or who interact with known members of criminal or biased organizations. CPD also renews its request to establish joint investigations with the OIG regarding allegations against Department members of anti-government and extremist activities and associations to reach successful conclusions to investigations.

CPD has shown its commitment to ensuring that there is no place in CPD for Department members who actively participate in or belong to biased organizations or interact with known members of biased organizations. All allegations will be aggressively investigated, and any proven misconduct will result in discipline up to and including separation from CPD.

The CPD appreciates the OIG's work on this important matter, and looks forward to continuing our collaborative work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Larry Snelling", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Larry Snelling
Superintendent of Police
Chicago Police Department



Jacob Diederich

Investigative Analyst for Public Safety

LaDonna Candia-Flanagan

Chief Investigative Analyst for Public Safety

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For further information about this report, please contact the City of Chicago Office of Inspector General, 740 N. Sedgwick St., Suite 200, Chicago, IL 60654, or visit our website at igchicago.org.

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