RESEARCHERS EVALUATE HOMICIDES COMMITTED BY FAR-RIGHT LONER EXTREMISTS

TALLAHASSEE, FLA—In a recent study published in *Criminology & Public Policy* (CPP) [Volume 12, Issue 1], researchers found that far-right loner extremists differ in many ways from other far-rightists. Additionally, the homicide offending patterns of loner extremists also appear to vary from the homicide acts committed by far-right extreme groups. Understanding these differences may aid in predicting and preventing lethal violence from far-right extremists.

Professor Jeff Gruenewald of the University of Arkansas, Professor Steven Chermak of Michigan State University, and Professor Joshua Freilich of the John Jay College of Criminal Justice, report that far-right loner extremists are more likely than other group-extremists to have a military background, mental illness, and live alone. Loner extremists are also more likely than other extremists to use a firearm, kill multiple victims, select government targets, and plan to die during the commission of the crime. Loners are also less likely to be married.

Policy Essay authors Paul Gill and Emily Corner of the University College London, note the importance of research that examines extremists from the far right, especially given the many studies that have focused solely on violent Islamist organizations in recent years. Randy Borum of the University of South Florida, raises caution about the challenges associated with defining loner attacks, including, the role that radicalization plays in the process, and how mental illness is connected to the actions of extremist loners. Borum points out that a small number of lone actors are driven by extremist ideologies and an even smaller number are radicalized. In terms of defining attacks, Borum calls for an approach that distinguishes the extent to which the offender initiated, planned, and executed the attack without assistance; the extent of the attacker’s independence; and the extent to which the attack is driven by a politically, socially, or ideologically based grievance.

Senior Editor for the segment, Professor Gary LaFree of the University of Maryland, notes that although not perfect or complete, researchers have made remarkable progress in identifying and analyzing terrorist attacks over the past several years. International databases on terrorism have been developed and data collection on terror attacks and terrorists has become more widespread. LaFree urges the continuation of these developments in the effort to combat extremism.