

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT?

This document provides an overview of **Patriot Front** and is one in a series of extremism briefing notes produced by the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD) out of a long-running partnership with Microsoft*.

The purpose of these documents is to provide entry-level context and background about various extremist and conspiratorial narratives and movements. These are not intended as comprehensive deep dives. Rather, they present key concepts, theories, terminology and imagery deployed by the given movements or narratives. Further reading recommendations are provided at the end of each document, should readers want to learn more.

*Microsoft makes no statement as to the accuracy of the contents of this document. The contents herein are a product of ISD and are provided for informational purposes only.

Content Warning: this document contains material that may be harmful, triggering or traumatizing to some readers.

FAQ

How are these briefing notes produced?

They are informed by both literature review and digital research using publicly accessible websites, social media pages, channels and forums. This briefing note was published in October 2022 and is based on research conducted in August 2022.

What topics do they cover?

Topics span the ideological spectrum, covering prevalent extremist theories and narratives, as well as specific extremist movements. The scope ranges, with some briefing notes covering specific conspiracy theories like “The Great Replacement”, and others looking at broader, overarching issues like extreme misogyny online.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS? GET IN TOUCH WITH ISD AT INFO@ISDGLOBAL.ORG

PATRIOT FRONT (PF)

Patriot Front (PF) is an American white supremacist organization that aims to restore and reshape American society along the lines of perceived post-revolutionary traditions and virtues. It can be classified as a neo-fascist hate group that is organized around the goal of preserving white American identity.



The Patriot Front logo consists of fasces: bundled wooden sticks with an axe in the middle. The symbol dates to ancient Rome and was the original symbol of fascism under Benito Mussolini's rule in Italy. The surrounding thirteen stars refer to the United States' original 13 colonies – a historical reference to the Revolutionary War era.

Origins

Patriot Front was founded in the wake of the 'Unite the Right' rally in August 2017 in Charlottesville. It splintered from the white nationalist Vanguard America (VA) after disagreements between VA's current leader Thomas Ryan Rousseau and VA leader Dillon Hopper. VA received bad publicity after the perpetrator of the Charlottesville [car attack](#) that killed one and injured 35 was seen marching with VA activists. Rousseau used this moment in late August 2017, during which Vanguard America's leader was under attack, to cut off Hopper's access to the Discord servers and rebranded the VA website into Patriot Front.

Its rebranding allegedly aimed to establish a white nationalist organization that could appeal to larger audiences through paying increased attention to its public image and adopting more profound and subtler strategies to convey its white supremacist ideology. While the current size of the organization is unclear, leaked internal communication from January 2022 suggests that Patriot Front had 200 to 300 active members at that time.



Patriot Front leader Thomas Rousseau during a march from the Lincoln memorial to the capitol building in Washington D.C. on 6 December 2021.

Ideology and narratives

Patriot Front's ideology is built on the perception that White American culture and heritage are under threat from multiple angles and are facing complete annihilation if no action is taken. Like many other white nationalist groups, it presupposes that American identity is under threat and must be protected. It fears that America's white ethnocultural identity is being erased and replaced, and claims that migration has eradicated American culture and heritage. Moreover, the moral foundations of the society on which American identity was originally built have been eroded by individualism and immoral behavior.

By reviving the American revolutionary spirit, the organization aims to restore the connection between American soil and the people who live on it, an approach reminiscent of the 'Blood and Soil' (*Blut und Boden*) slogan of Nazi Germany. The Patriot Front manifesto explicitly states that membership to the American nation is inherited through blood, emphasizing the movement's ethnonationalist understanding of identity.

PF's manifesto states that the United States suffer under the tyrant rule of a corrupt government, which needs to be overthrown. To this aim, Patriot Front seeks to achieve a 'hard reset' of American society. This is supposedly necessary to restore the perceived traditions and virtues of the post-revolutionary US. To accomplish this goal, it resorts to nonelectoral means because it regards contemporary politics as one of the primary causes for the nation's destruction.

Patriot Front packages its white supremacist ideology in the concepts of 'life', 'liberty' and 'victory' – notions that are also displayed on the movement's logo. According to its website,

‘life’ is about Americans recognizing themselves not just as citizens, but as people with communal heritage on the continent. It is the life of this nation that must be defended. ‘Liberty’ is about bringing back the American revolutionary spirit that is necessary to resist against the corrupt and tyrannical state rule. In the end, ‘victory’ will be achieved when the American nation is restored and Americans live in a sovereign society, in which the interests of the collective supersede those of the individual.

Hate

To the outside world, Patriot Front presents itself as a protector of American culture and heritage, without openly attacking marginalized groups. Hateful components of its ideology are not prominently propagated. Investigative journalists from [ProPublica](#) and [UnicornRiot](#) – who released 400GB of documents, internal communication, and uncut photo and video material of the organization – contributed to exposing the movement’s true agenda. Their insights have revealed how Nazism, racism, antisemitism and misogyny are widely shared ideological traits among members of the movement.

Collective action repertoire

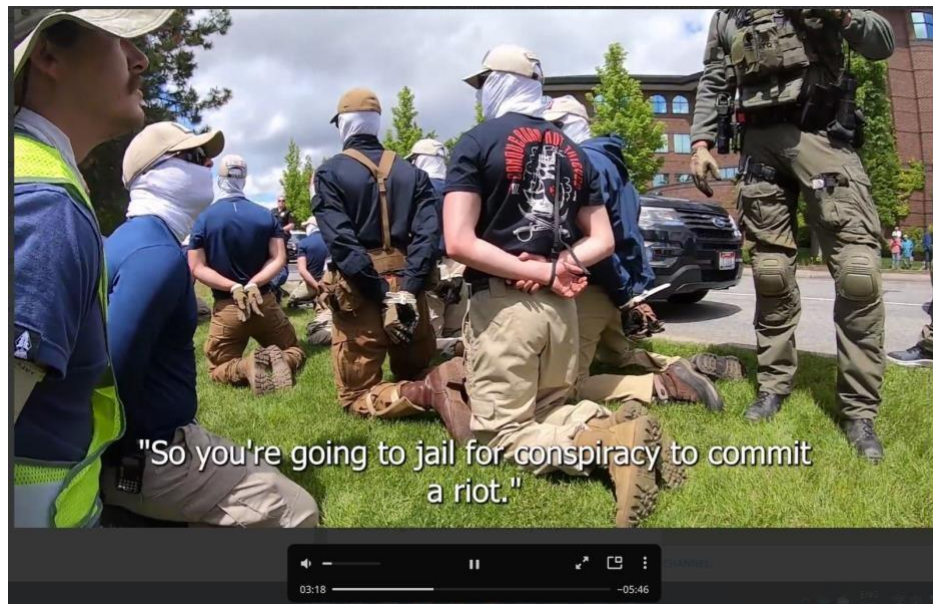
Public protests

Patriot Front’s activism involves both on- and offline forms of collective action. Members regularly engage in well-organized, yet sudden street demonstrations, often on locations that are of historical or political significance. These marches and rallies across the US are generally attended by roughly thirty to one hundred Patriot Front members wearing the same apparel: khaki cargo pants, blue t-shirts, caps, facemasks, and often sunglasses. Sometimes individual members are equipped with tactical gear such as riot-shields and shin guards. Typically, PF leader Rousseau functions as the public face of the organization while the rest remains incognito.

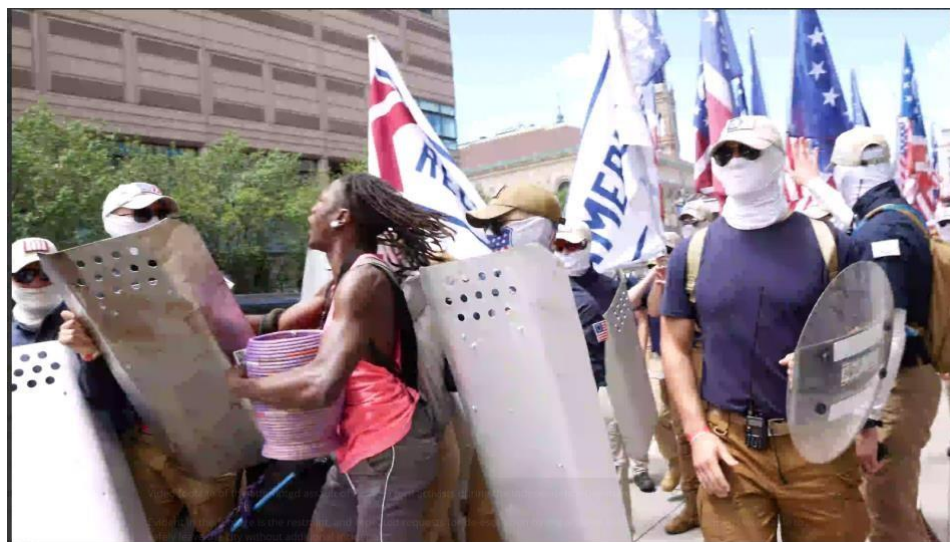
- On **6 December 2021**, an estimated hundred members [marched](#) in Washington D.C. from the Lincoln Memorial toward the Capitol, carrying ‘Reclaim America’ and ‘Victory or Death’ banners. In January 2022, dozens of activists again took to the streets of the [American capital](#) and [Chicago](#) to participate in March for Life anti-abortion rallies, where they handed out flyers and displayed ‘Strong Families make Strong Nations’ banners.
- On **11 June 2022**, police in Idaho [arrested](#) 31 members of the Patriot Front near a Pride event the city of Coeur d’Alene, Idaho. They were charged with conspiracy to riot, after law enforcement received information that the group was planning to disrupt an LGBTQ+ Pride event. The moving truck transporting the activists was pulled over on its way to the

festival after a citizen warned the police it encountered a group of men that “looked like a little army”.

- On **2 July 2022**, around one hundred Patriot Front members [marched](#) through Boston ahead of Independence Day. The march took a violent turn when Patriot Front activists and a Black activist physically clashed.



Still from Patriot Front video montage released after members were arrested due to Patriot Front's planned to disturb an Idaho LGBTQ+ pride event.



Still from the Patriot Front video showing the confrontation between Black activist CharleMurrell and PF members.

Offline action, online dissemination

In addition to protests, PF's offline activism includes banner drops, stencil and poster placements, training meetups, flyer hand-outs, and hikes. Through these localized forms of protest the movement disseminates slogans such as 'Reclaim America', 'Strong families, strong nations', 'for the nation, against the state', 'America First' and 'Revolution is tradition'.

Of pivotal importance to the organization is the capture and online dissemination of its offline activism. Patriot Front utilizes social media platforms like Telegram to circulate high-definition photos and professionally edited video montages of its street activism. Montages show members participating in marches, hikes, boxing and fitness meetups, applying stickers, and dropping down banners from buildings. Videos and photos are regularly uploaded displaying members vandalizing murals that sympathize with marginalized groups, such as artworks devoted to George Floyd, Black Lives Matter or the LGBT+ community.





Images from PF's main Telegram channel, where photos and videos of the organization's offline activism are posted and shared daily.

PF's main Telegram channel has nearly 16,000 subscribers and is mainly used to circulate monthly reports on activism, sharing videos and photos, sharing (alternative) media appearances of Rousseau and sharing promotional materials. In addition, it hosts a website that contains its manifesto, links to the social media platforms on which it is active and a live feed of its Telegram channel. It also contains an application form for those interested in joining the movement, asking applicants to provide their motivation, religious beliefs, history of substance abuse, and skills that they can offer.

Further reading

[Patriot Front](#) – Southern Poverty Law Center

[Patriot Front](#) – Anti-Defamation League

[Patriot Front fascist leak exposes nationwide racist campaigns](#) – UnicornRiot

[They are racist; Some of them have guns. Inside the white supremacist group hiding in plain sight.](#) – ProPublica