

Military Anti-Extremism Order Fails to Identify the Target

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By Tony Perkins - Family Research Council

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Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me. A [memo](#) from President Biden's Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin directs commanders to conduct a "Stand-Down to Address Extremism in the Ranks." The goal, ostensibly, is to flush out people with extremist views from our nation's military. But the memo never defines "extremist or dissident ideologies."

As FRC's General Jerry Boykin explained on [Washington Watch](#) yesterday, the order relies upon the theory that the ranks of our military are filled with white supremacists based on the Capitol riot on January 6. In a stunning act of cynical political theater, Democrats have turned the Capitol into Fort Pelosi due to baseless claims of an ongoing right-wing threat of violence. But as Boykin pointed out, the military does a good job weeding out those associated with the KKK or other white supremacist groups. The only thing this order accomplishes is to open the door to hazy definitions of a broader, and more sinister, interpretation -- targeting social conservatives. Military attorney Roger Maxwell added on [Washington Watch](#) that "the line is just not clear at all," but according to the DoD definition, "efforts to deprive individuals of their civil rights is also lumped under this definition of extremism."

The Supreme Court has twisted the meaning of "civil rights" to include abortion, same-sex marriage, and transgender ideology. This means that a servicemember who attends a pro-life event could be hauled before a court martial as an extremist. In fact, the definition of action is so squishy it could include any sort of "advocating for a certain belief system," added Maxwell. "Any sort of Facebook post or offhand comment," he said, "could potentially fit under this definition." So if a servicemember posts that biological males shouldn't be able to compete in women's sports, it could violate Secretary Austin's order.

The problem is particularly pointed for Christian chaplains, whose job it is to spiritually counsel soldiers. "A chaplain of a normal Christian persuasion would fit under this definition" as an extremist, said Maxwell. Congressman Jim Banks (R-Ind.) told me on [Washington Watch](#) that his Democratic colleagues have a definition of extremism that "is pretty broad and politically driven." He explained, "they call me an extremist. They call you an extremist. They call the Family Research Council extremist. They call most Republicans extremist." Maybe the ones who believe half of Americans are too fringe to be included in society are the real extremists.

I understand the instinct to think these concerns are a bit too paranoid. All we have so far is a vague definition, after all. But these concerns are grounded in historical experience. During the Obama administration, the military, relying in part on the SPLC's biased "hate map," listed the American Family Association as an extremist group, and warned servicemembers they could be court-martialed for interacting with them. We can't let it happen again.

Congressman Banks said Democrats are trying to "drive a stake through" the heart of the Republican party by labelling them as extremists. They want to "prevent us from winning back the majority in the 2022 election and the White House in 2024," he said. But he believes their efforts

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will backfire. Once again, it looks like Democrats are set on overplaying their hand. The most effective recourse for those who are concerned the military will push out conservatives and Christians is to vote.
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