

Defending against all enemies, foreign and domestic

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Our calendars are filling up with too many tragic anniversaries to count. After the mass shootings in Atlanta and Boulder, March 16 and 22 will always be reminders of the domestic terrorism that threatens every person in this country. And as we begin a new month, one can't help but realize how many times we've faced these same feelings of grief and outrage.

In April alone, our country must confront the anniversaries of a mass shooting at Fort Hood, April 2, the bombing at the Boston Marathon, April 15, a massive explosion in Oklahoma City, April 19, and the massacres at Virginia Tech, April 16, and Columbine High School, April 20. No matter how much time has passed, these attacks break our hearts, and they beg us to adapt and reform so they never happen again.

They also demand that we look inward and start asking tough questions. Because many of these attacks targeted people of color, bolstered by toxic rhetoric and centuries of oppression. Many of these tragedies stemmed from a lack of mental health care or a surplus of dangerous conspiracies. And in every one of these terrorist acts, the perpetrators were either U.S. citizens or longtime residents.

Simply put, domestic violent extremism is the greatest threat to our homeland security.

In the weeks following the insurrection at the US Capitol, the FBI Director reported that the agency's domestic terrorism caseload has [doubled](#) over the past four years.

President Biden [ordered](#) a comprehensive threat assessment of domestic extremism.

And the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced [\\$1.8 billion](#) in counterterrorism grants for states and cities, requiring these communities to spend at least 7.5% of the funds "combating domestic violent extremism."

According to the [Washington Post](#), the 2019 mass shooting in El Paso – the deadliest attack on Hispanic Americans in modern history – was the “catalyzing event” which first convinced DHS officials that every community must prepare for local acts of terrorism. Two years later, DHS Secretary Mayorkas [emphasized](#) that state and local governments must have “the necessary capabilities to detect and protect against threats from domestic violent extremism.”

At the New Mexico Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (DHSEM), we couldn’t agree more.

And with the funds from these DHS grants, New Mexico can invest in data-sharing tools that allow our law enforcement to receive the most up-to-date information on possible threats. We can fund training events that strive for seamless coordination with hospitals when lives are on the line. We can purchase protective gear, medical supplies, communications equipment and any other tools our first responders might need when tragedy strikes.

There are powerful forces that fuel domestic terrorism – racism, misogyny and twisted conspiracy theories, just to name a few. And yes, it will take far more than any one investment or policy change to end these systemic threats. But accepting this support from DHS and preparing for the worst is a good place to start.