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Research Aim

Research question:

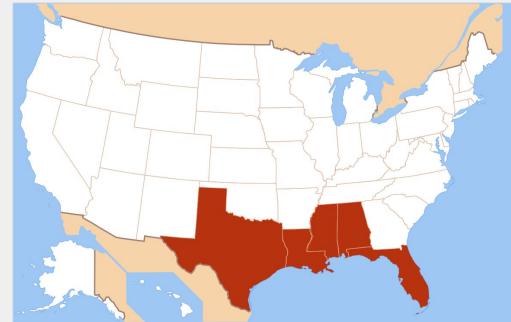
Why do the Oath Keepers have a noticeable presence in the Gulf Coast area?

Definitions:

- Gulf Coast Area
- Domestic Violent Extremism (DVE)
- Noticeable Presence

Research Objectives:

- identify and understand this group's motivations, intentions, and capabilities through investigation of their origins, key figures, and social media



Oath Keepers



FAQ's

What is their goal?

- Seeks to protect Americans from perceived violations rights by the government
- Mainly anti-government extremism

How were they born? Who was the founder?

- Stewart Rhodes is the founder, who got his start in far-right conspiracy theories
- Portraying themselves as the heirs of the Founding Fathers and the federal government as a modern-day colonial Great Britain

Where are they from?

- First organized rally at Lexington Green, Massachusetts
- Loosely based organization; allegiance to ideals is greater than allegiance to organization
- HQ near Fort Worth, Texas

What does their logo mean?



Evolution



Phase One

2009-2015

- Political:
 - Election of Barack Obama
 - 2009 Financial Crisis
 - Tea Party rise
- Social:
 - First elected Black president,
 - Entirely Democratic Party controlled government
 - Major government oversight and power versus Bush administration
- Cultural:
 - A wish to protect “founder” American philosophy and culture
 - Participated in a 2014 armed standoff in Ferguson, Missouri

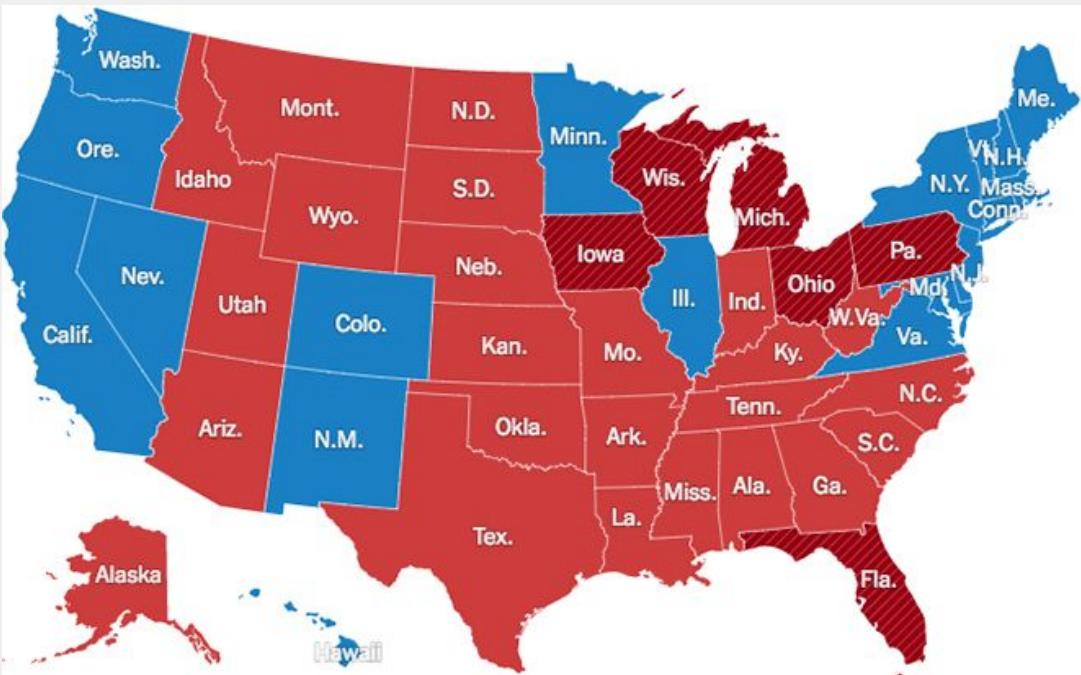


Phase Two

2016-2020

- Political:
 - Election of Donald Trump
 - Second presidential campaign of Donald Trump
- Cultural:
 - Shift from focusing on Black Lives Matter (BLM) to fighting antifa and free speech
- Social:
 - Zero engagement with white nationalists groups,
 - Declined public activity in 2018-2019
 - 2020 - Covid-19 misinformation and conflict with BLM

2016 Presidential Election Results



Phase Three

2021 - Present

- Political:
 - Election of Joe Biden
 - January 6th insurrection
- Storming of the Capitol:
 - Oath Keepers Objective: prevention of Joe Biden from taking Presidency
- A Florida Oath Keeper charged for his involvement in the Capitol violence said that no leader gave an order to forcibly enter the Capitol
- National leadership denies responsibility for attack but local chapters have discussed plans



Key Figures + Social Media



Social Media Used

Twitter: @Oathkeepers; had 14,927 tweets with 33,467 followers when deleted

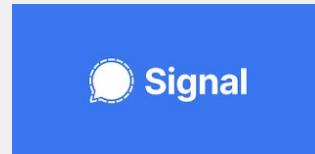
YouTube: *OathKeepersOK* ; had fewer than 45,000 subscribers when deleted

Facebook: Facebook Messenger used during January 6th riots

Website : <https://www.oathkeepers.org/>

Other lesser-known social media platforms used:

- MeWe, Parler, GoToMeeting, Signal, Oath Keepers TV



Key Figures in the Gulf Coast



-Kelly Meggs-
Former alleged leader of
the Florida Chapter, and
resided in **Dunnellon,**
Florida.



-Kellye SoRelle-
Current acting President
of the Oath Keepers, and
a lawyer located in
Granbury, Texas.



-Graydon Young-
Member from
Englewood, Florida
charged in the January
6th insurrection.

Kelly Meggs

Facebook: Oct. 2008 - Jan. 2021 (closed)

Instagram

MeWe:

- Used email address
- Multiple photos of him with Oath Keepers merch at the capitol

(Kelly attended at least two meetings on GoToMeeting on December 31, 2020. On a meeting titled "SE leaders de 1/6/21 op call." he attended under the name "gator 1" and he attended another meeting called "florida de op planning chat." with his phone number as the username.)



Kelly SoRelle

Twitter : @kellyesorelle

Facebook : two profiles;

- Business : “Kellye SoRelle Law”
- Personal : “Kellye SoRelle”



Graydon Young

Member from Englewood, Florida

Facebook: Dec. 2008 - Jan. 8 2021

Instagram : Aug. 8 2018 - Jan. 12 2021

On a Facebook post, he commented how he had a MeWe and Parler account, and wanted to move other people to being using them as well



Additional Key Figures

Edward Vallejo | Thomas Caldwell | Joseph Hackett | Joshua James | Roberto Minuta | David Moerschel | Punta Gorda | Kenneth Harrelson | Greg McWhirter | Brian Ulrich | James Beeks | Donovan Crowl | William Isaacs | Sandra Parker | Bernie Parker | Laura Steele | Jonathan Walden
Connie Meggs

- All of these members conspired with each other to oppose by force the execution of the laws governing the transfer of presidential power.

Social Media Influence on Oath Keepers

Oath Keepers use Social Media to:

1. Promote their ideas
2. Recruit new members
3. Communicate with existing members

Individual Accounts are used to:

- Personal accounts to spread individual and group beliefs



Implications and Impact



Why do the Oath Keepers have a noticeable presence in the Gulf Coast area?

- Majority Republican Gulf Coast area breeds an environment of of extreme right wing and conservative beliefs due to historical context
- Their use of lesser known social media such as MeWe to spread beliefs to their target audience and beyond allows them to continue to spread their messages and to recruit more members to their cause
- There were many figures who were charged in the January 6th insurrection that were from the Gulf Coast Area and many of their attorneys fees have been paid by Oath Keeper members and other supporters.

Implications and Impact

- Growing right wing extremism in the South and the Gulf Coast area, propagated by the Oath Keepers and other DVE group
- Increase the likelihood of right-wing extremist events
- Spreading harmful conspiracies, like the New World Order, which fractures the trust that citizens have in the government
- Furthering the ideological divide between the right and the left in the country, because of the increased use of social media to spread their beliefs

