Atomwaffen Division (AWD)

Key Points

• AWD is a small neo-Nazi group whose members are preparing for a race war to combat what they consider the cultural and racial displacement of the white race.

• AWD, which is made up of online groups and small, localized cells, spreads their hateful propaganda via the internet and by distributing provocative fliers, posters, and stickers.

• Members, who meet and organize online, participate in “hate camps,” organized hiking excursions and military-style training exercises across the country.
• Members have participated in white supremacist rallies and events organized by other white supremacist groups.

• Members and associates have been linked to violent crimes including murder and alleged plots to attack civilians, nuclear facilities and synagogues.

• A series of arrests in 2019-20 has decimated the group's active membership.

Origins

Atomwaffen Division (AWD) is a small neo-Nazi group that became active in 2016. The group is believed to have originated online from a now-defunct neo-Nazi forum called Iron March, which was known for its extreme content and calls for violence. According to the AWD website, they are "a revolutionary national socialist organization centered around political activism and the practice of an autonomous fascist lifestyle." They promote the idea that societal and governmental "systems" are collapsing and that democracy and capitalism have "given way to Jewish oligarchies and globalist bankers resulting in the cultural and racial displacement of the white race."

Members train in preparation for an impending race war and promote the use of violence to reach their goal of "uncompromising victory." In a promotional video published on January 21, 2018, members, dressed in military-styled camouflaged fatigues, shout "gas the Kikes" and "race war now" as they fire weapons and practice tactical maneuvers.

In December 2017, one of AWD's leaders, John Cameron Denton (aka Vincent Snyder), laid out the group's plans on their Siege Culture website: "Our responsibility right now is resistance, anything that happens after that we’ll simply adapt to it and work with what we have." Denton, who lives in Texas, has attended white supremacist rallies and events in Houston and Austin alongside members of the White Lives Matter movement and the Aryan Renaissance Society.
Atomwaffen members have a macabre fascination with serial killer Charles Manson and his vision of a race war between whites and blacks. For this reason, in 2017, Denton and other Atomwaffen members sought out neo-Nazi Manson devotee and former American Nazi Party member, James Nolan Mason, and republished some of his writing, including Siege, a book based on a collection of newsletters Mason wrote in the 1980s.

In addition to Charles Manson, AWD members pay tribute to other white men who've committed mass murders, including Dylann Roof, Anders Breivik, Ted Kaczynski and Timothy McVeigh, even referring to the latter three as “the father, the son, and the holy spirit.”

Atomwaffen draws some of its influences from satanic ideas and beliefs. Required and recommended reading lists for Atomwaffen’s “aspiring initiates” include books that draw on satanic and occult themes, while some Atomwaffen members promote a particular version of Satanism known as “The Order of Nine Angles,” commonly abbreviated as ONA or O9A, which is steeped in neo-Nazi themes that praise Adolf Hitler, promote Holocaust denial and identify Jews as the enemy.

The Order of Nine Angles’ spiritual leader, Anton Long (which may be a pseudonym for David Myatt), is a notorious British neo-Nazi leader with a violent criminal history. Siege Culture, an Atomwaffen website, promotes Long's book Hostia: Secret Teachings of the Order of Nine Angles, an instructional guide for would-be O9A members that encourages “satanic novices” to undergo a personal transformation to achieve a more revolutionary mindset. Suggestions include enlisting in a police force, championing heretical views, becoming a professional burglar and joining the armed forces (in wartime) to gain combat experience.

Atomwaffen members participate in “hate camp” hiking excursions and military-style training exercises. These camps are used to prepare members for eventual societal collapse and to indoctrinate new members. The first known hate camp
took place in Illinois' Shawnee National Forest in late September 2017, and reportedly drew fewer than 12 participants. Other camps have been held in Death Valley, California, Washington state and Texas.

Activity attributed to Atomwaffen has been reported in multiple states, including California, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Texas, Massachusetts, Washington, North Carolina and Virginia. The group's propaganda often promotes violence against minority communities, including LGBTQ+ people, Jews, Muslims, and African Americans.

AWD now extends beyond America into Europe and includes a German offshoot. In mid-2018, a video entitled "An Atomwaffen announcement" surfaced; it began, "Greetings from Germany," from a masked Atomwaffen man speaking in German and then in English. His message to his American neo-Nazis included, "Also here we prepare for the last, long fight, soon to come. Sieg Heil." More recently, reports of this AWD cell made news after death threats allegedly associated with AWD were reported against German politicians Cem Özdemir and Claudia Roth. According to media reports, the threats included, "At the moment, we are planning how and when we will execute you; At the next public rally? Or will we get you in front of your home?"

Siege Culture
James Mason’s writings have had a profound impact on the Atomwaffen Division, and the group has embraced the ideology of Siege as their own. The book is required reading for new Atomwaffen members, and it forms the apocalyptic heart of the group’s core tenets, otherwise known as “Siege Culture.”

Siege Culture (also spelled Siegekultur) is a philosophy, political orientation and spiritual outlook, dominated by hate and anchored in fascist ideology. Adherents are urged to drop out of a “corrupt” system, even as they engage in direct attacks against it. Under the influence of AWD leader John Cameron Denton, Siege Culture departs from Mason’s writings to incorporate elements of occultism and even Satanism.

James Mason publicly denies having any direct ties to AWD, but his involvement appears to run deep. Audio recordings of Mason, speaking on the group’s behalf, have been posted to AWD’s Siege Culture website, and a recent photograph shows Mason wearing an Atomwaffen patch, surrounded by members of the group.

James Mason pictured with Atomwaffen members in an Atomwaffen video entitled “Nuclear Congress”

Atomwaffen’s embrace of Mason has elevated the author and his writings within the white supremacist movement. In recent years, new international white
supremacist groups have embraced the violent rhetoric of Siege Culture, including Sonnenkrieg Division, Feuerkrieg Division, Vorherrschaft Division and The Base.

Alleged members of Atomwaffen and The Base

**Sonnenkrieg Division**

White supremacist organization Sonnenkrieg Division (SKD), which launched online in 2018, has strong ties to Atomwaffen. SKD is predominantly focused on political and social issues in Europe, specifically the UK and Eastern Europe, and its members take a nihilistic view of the world, which they seek to destroy.

There is significant overlap in SKD and AWD's core ideologies, use of graphics and imagery, rhetoric, cross-promotion and communication. Like Atomwaffen, Sonnenkrieg rails against a perceived cultural and racial obliteration of the white race and glorifies the teachings of Siege author James Mason.

On June 18, 2019, two alleged members of SKD, Michal Szewczuk and Oskar Dunn-Koczorowski, were convicted of promoting terrorism and neo-Nazi propaganda online. The pair came to the attention of authorities, after they posted an image online of Prince Harry with a gun to his head and the caption “See Ya Later Race
Traitor.” Dunn-Koczorowski was sentenced to 18 months in detention and Szewczuk was sentenced to four years in prison.

Authorities arrested another member of the neo-Nazi organization, Andrew Dymock, on December 4, 2019, and charged him with 12 counts including encouraging people to commit terrorism, disseminating terrorist publications, terrorist fundraising and possessing material useful to terrorists.

Iron March

The fascist social networking platform “Iron March” was founded in 2011 by Russian nationalist Alisher Mukhitdinov, aka Alexander Slavros, as a “central communications hub for its members online as well as the HQ for the online Fascist Space and the primary source for studying our worldview, thus acting as the Fascist Alma Mater.” This slogan for this online “global fascist fraternity” underscores its anti-Semitic and racist agenda: “Gas the Kikes, Race War Now, 1488 Boots on the Ground.”

Atomwaffen Division is one of the site’s legacies; many of the group’s initial networks were forged on Iron March forums.

Following the May 2017 murder of two Atomwaffen members, allegedly at the hands of former AWD member Devon Arthurs (see below), Iron March’s Administrator posted a disclaimer, “IronMarch endorses Atomwaffen but we are separate entities, do not directly conflate one with the other... we are foremost a place of learning, and as such we provide these groups with educational materials, advice if it is asked for, and a platform for their voice...”

Iron March served as a global online meeting space for individuals to communicate with others who embraced similar extremist views, helping to radicalize and indoctrinate those engaged on the site. The topics on the forum were under different subsections: “News” highlighted current events related to
fascism and nationalism; “The Beer Hall” was dedicated to discussions on topics such as “The Jewish Question,” “militarism sports and fitness” and “race and ethnic relations;” “Race War Central” included regional and country-specific content; and “Concentration Camp” included a subforum, “The Showers,” referencing the Nazi extermination camps, with the description: “They come in but they don’t come out.”

At the height of its popularity, the site attracted more than 15,000 users. Iron March was shut down in November 2017, but in November 2019, data associated with the forum was leaked to the public, exposing user details, messages and other revealing information, including insight into individuals who claimed to have ties to the U.S. military. The fallout from the data leak has included the unmasking of several forum users and has highlighted the forum's broad geographic reach, as well as the relative youth of its users.

**Atomwaffen Related U.S. Arrests**

**Devon Arthurs and Brandon Russell**

The AWD Florida chapter, once considered the largest in the country, took a major hit in May 2017 when Devon Arthurs, a former Atomwaffen member who converted to Islam, allegedly murdered two of his roommates, Atomwaffen members Jeremy Himmelman and Andrew Oneschuk.

An investigation following the murders revealed that a fourth Atomwaffen Florida member, Brandon Russell, aka Odin, sometimes named in media reports as the group's national leader, had been collecting explosive materials in his apartment. Russell fled but was quickly arrested by police.

Arthurs told law enforcement that AWD planned to use explosives to attack civilians, nuclear power facilities and synagogues in the Florida area. In January 2018, Russell, who pleaded guilty to possessing an unregistered destructive device and unlawful storage of explosive materials, was sentenced to five years in federal
prison housed in Terre Haute, Indiana. Devon Arthurs faces two counts of first-
degree murder but is undergoing treatment at a state mental health facility until
he is deemed competent to stand trial.

Nicholas Giampa

Virginia teen Nicholas Giampa, who allegedly shot and killed his girlfriend's
parents after they became upset by his rumored neo-Nazi views, was, at the very
least, influenced by Atomwaffen. Giampa praised Mason's book, Siege, and
retweeted material from Siege Culture. He also retweeted at least one Atomwaffen
photo and praised someone named “Ryan Atomwaffen” for his white supremacist
book collection.

Sam Woodward

On January 12, 2018, law enforcement officers arrested 20-year-old California
resident Sam Woodward for the stabbing death of former classmate Blaze
Bernstein, a 19-year-old college student. Two days prior to the arrest, Bernstein's
body was found with 19 stab wounds to his neck, buried in a shallow grave in a
park in Lake Forest, California. In addition to felony murder charges in connection
with the death of Bernstein, the Orange County District Attorney's Office charged
Woodward on August 2, 2018, with hate crimes for allegedly targeting Bernstein
because of his sexual orientation.

Woodward’s association with Atomwaffen came to light in photos, social media
and leaked Discord chat logs, where he interacted with Atomwaffen members and
frequently discussed his hatred of gay people and Jews. One of these photographs
show Woodward giving a Nazi salute alongside other Atomwaffen members.
Following the murder, Atomwaffen affiliate @Trajan_AWD justified Woodward's
actions on Twitter, posting, “Sam Woodward did nothing wrong, some gay tried to
kiss him and he reacted appropriately.”

Vasillios G. Pistolis
On July 11, 2018, U.S. Marine Lance Corporal Vasillios George Pistolis, who had been stationed at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, as an active duty Marine, was demoted to Private and discharged from the Corps for his alleged ties to neo-Nazis groups including Atomwaffen Division and the Traditionalist Worker Party. Pistolis denied attending Unite the Right in Charlottesville in 2017, despite being caught on camera participating in violence at the rally. He was found guilty at a summary court-martial on charges of failing to obey an order of regulation and making a false official statement under the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

**Jeffrey Raphiel Clark**

On November 9, 2018, authorities arrested Jeffrey Clark, charging him with illegal transportation of a firearm across state lines, possession of an illegal high-capacity magazine and unlawful use of a controlled substance (methamphetamine). Clark was an ardent admirer of Charleston shooter Dylann Roof, and his Gab screen name—“DC Bowl Gang”—was a reference to Roof’s bowl-style haircut. Clark’s relatives had contacted the FBI, concerned about his alleged radicalization, including fantasies about a race war and about killing Jews and blacks. In addition to finding bullets and drugs in Clark’s home, law enforcement reportedly also discovered a flier promoting Atomwaffen, and learned that Clark had reposted Atomwaffen propaganda on Gab. Clark was released with three years of supervised probation in September 2019.
On February 1, 2019, authorities arrested Benjamin Bogard of New Braunfels, Texas, on child pornography charges. He pleaded guilty to the charges on May 1, 2019, in a San Antonio federal court and was sentenced to 80 months in federal prison for possessing obscene visual representation of the sexual abuse of children. According to reports, the illegal videos were discovered as part of a counterterrorism investigation based on concerns he was “mobilizing to violence.” Although Bogard's original disconcerting content was removed, some of the material was reposted to Telegram's extreme white supremacist channel, Terrorwave Refined. In one 32-second clip, Bogard is seen loading a shotgun, saying: “You know what? I really fuckin' hate Jews, alright? I just can’t stand their shit. And, ya know, I just want to go to a fuckin' synagogue as well, and shoot that shit up. They're killing our race. Fuckin' hate Jews. Gas the kikes! Race war now!” He then fires three rounds.

In another video, Bogard is seen with a skeleton mask and oversized glasses encouraging violence against minorities, saying “...Now what you gotta [sic] do you gotta drive around the country keeping your eyes open for degenerates and mailman anything minorities niggers, Mexicans, women anything that is shit. Then what you gotta do is pull out your shotgun, get to the side of the road pull that shit open point it at them and then pull the trigger. The only right they
deserve is the right of lead. Heil Hitler.” According to media reports, Bogard claims to be a member of Atomwaffen

**Brian Patrick Baynes**

On June 5, 2019, authorities arrested Brian Patrick Baynes, who used the name “Ted Bundy” in the Atomwaffen Discord chats, on gun possession charges for reportedly lying about his drug use on a federal background check to buy firearms. According to the indictment, FBI analysts discovered text messages between Baynes and an undisclosed person regarding the purchase of marijuana, psychedelic mushrooms and LSD. Baynes was attempting to purchase additional weapons. He pleaded guilty to all charges in August 2019 and was sentenced on November 22, 2019, to two years of supervised release.

**Kaleb James Cole**

Kaleb Cole, of Snohomish County, who used the name “Khimaere” or “khim” in the Atomwaffen Discord chats, is a self-admitted leader of Atomwaffen's Washington cell. An Extreme Risk Protection Order filed on October 8, 2019, identified Cole as an imminent threat to harm others and he was stripped of several firearms including an AK-47 rifle and several handguns. In the filings, authorities documented Cole’s role in organizing “Hate Camps” essentially training grounds for Atomwaffen members and accused him of taking “active steps or preparation for an impending ‘race war.”” According to law enforcement, Cole had photos from December 24, 2018, on his phone, posing in front of the Auschwitz concentration camp, and he had traveled to Ukraine and other areas of Eastern Europe posing with the AWD flag.
Andrew Jon Thomasberg

Andrew Jon Thomasberg, aka “GrecoViking,” a 21-year-old resident of Mclean, Virginia, pleaded guilty to possession of firearms while being an unlawful drug user and to making a false statement in order to illegally purchase a firearm. According to the complaint, Thomasberg allegedly bought an AK-47 illegally through the gun store where he worked and lied on his federal background check about his use of LSD. Thomasberg reportedly used the username “GrecoViking” in Atomwaffen Division private chats, but also referred to himself as “Psychedelic Nazi.” In these chats, Thomasberg appeared to be deeply entrenched in neo-Nazi ideology and displayed a penchant for violence. In one post he writes, “Tfw [that feel when] when ypure [sic] trying to figure out the most utilitarian death for queers.” In another post he echoes an AWD slogan, “Gas the kikes / Race war now.” He also asked the group, “Any moral reservations against raping jew broads in rahowa [racial holy war]?”

Media reports identify Thomasberg as the leader of the AWD Virginia cell.
On February 28, 2020, Thomasberg was sentenced to one year in prison for possessing firearms while being an unlawful drug user and making a false statement in order to illegally purchase a firearm.

**Aiden Bruce-Umbaugh**

On November 4, 2019, Aiden Bruce-Umbaugh, a self-professed member of Atomwaffen Division, was charged with possession of a firearm by an unlawful user of a controlled substance, after he was arrested in Post, Texas, dressed in tactical gear and in possession of multiple assault rifles. What began as a routine traffic stop for speeding led law enforcement to the discovery of an AR-15 rifle, two AK-47 rifles, a Sig Sauer 9mm pistol, at least 1,500 rounds of ammunition, a small canister of marijuana and approximately two grams of THC oil. Bruce-Umbaugh’s childhood friend, Atomwaffen leader Kaleb Cole, was in the car with him at the time of the arrest. According to the prosecutor in this case, Bruce-Umbaugh went by “Nythra” in the confidential AWD chats. He notes his ties to Atomwaffen Division in a December 2017, writing, “Been with AW [Atomwaffen Division] Washington chapter for almost a year.” Later he discusses plans while on a visit to Germany: “Comrades, I’m going to visit the Wewelsburg castle today. Will be trying my best to get some good photos, possibly some video that we could use. Wish me luck.”

Less than a year later, in the summer of 2018, Atomwaffen announced the formation of a German cell, accompanied by video footage showing an AWD member unfurling an Atomwaffen flag, with Wewelsburg castle, a prominent landmark in Nazi history, pictured in the background.
On February 26, 2020, authorities arrested former Texas state Atomwaffen leader John Cameron Denton.

Denton is charged with conspiracy to commit an offense against the United States, and interstate threats to injure, stemming from his alleged role in “swatting” calls. “Swatting” is a harassment tactic in which a perpetrator falsely reports an emergency to someone's home with the goal of having an emergency response team (often a SWAT team, hence the name) deployed to a dwelling.

According to court documents, Denton faces federal charges for his reported role in a swatting conspiracy, claiming bombs had been placed in three instances: One call made on January 27, 2019, to a Cabinet official living in Northern Virginia; a second call made on November 29, 2018, to Old Dominion University; and a third made on November 3, 2018, to Alfred Street Baptist Church, a historically black church in Alexandria, Virginia.

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**Cameron Brandon Shea, Kaleb Cole, Taylor Ashley Parker-Dipeppe and Johnny Roman Garza**

Also on February 26, 2020, federal and state authorities in Seattle, Houston, Tampa and Phoenix arrested four additional alleged Atomwaffen members. Authorities charged Cameron Brandon Shea, 24, of Redmond, Washington; Kaleb Cole, 24, of Montgomery, Texas; Taylor Ashley Parker-Dipeppe, 20, of Spring Hill, Florida; and Johnny Roman Garza, 20, of Queen Creek, Arizona, with conspiracy to threaten and intimidate journalists and activists. Their reported targets included journalists and two individuals associated with ADL.

Victims around the country received personalized fliers in the mail, which included their names and addresses. The fliers stated: “Your Actions Have Consequences. Our Patience Has Its Limits. You Have Been Visited by Your Local Neo-Nazis.” The flier shows a masked man holding an improvised device in front of a gated community. Another flier, which depicted people wearing skull masks and holding guns, stated: “These People Have Names and Addresses” while a third, swastika-adorned flier read: “We Know Where You Live.”
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