

**Written testimony of U.S. Representative Dan Bishop (NC-9)**

*Before the House Armed Services Committee  
The National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) of 2023  
April 28, 2022 at 10:00 am  
2118 Rayburn House Office Building*

Thank you for the opportunity to testify to the committee on the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) of 2023. As I am sure the committee is already aware, the Biden Administration is orchestrating an ongoing effort to purge so-called “domestic extremists” from the ranks of the military. I urge the committee in the strongest possible terms to reject any language in this year’s NDAA that would enable the Executive Branch to remove servicemembers simply for not holding the right political views.

Almost immediately following Secretary Lloyd Austin’s confirmation in February 2021, the Department of Defense identified domestic extremism in the military ranks as a threat. The Secretary then signed a memo directing commanding officers to institute a “stand-down” addressing this supposed extremism. Ultimately, the 2022 enacted NDAA included language requiring the Department to report on the desirability of establishing a separate punitive article in the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) on violent extremism. Notably, the initial version of the NDAA passed by the House included a section prohibiting servicemembers from participating in “extremist activities” or organizations and requiring data collection and monitoring on such activities. It would also have enabled the military to cite utilization of “online extremist content” as cause for separation.

Currently, this chamber is also considering legislation that would authorize subagencies within the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Justice, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation to monitor and prosecute incidents of domestic terrorism, especially “white supremacist” and “neo-Nazi” infiltration of the uniformed services and federal law enforcement agencies. This comes months after DHS released a bulletin warning of the heightened threat environment fueled by “false or misleading narratives and conspiracy theories,” especially grievances associated with claims of election fraud and COVID-19.

The DHS bulletin puts the Biden Administration’s efforts to root out domestic extremism into proper context. Far from being accurate descriptors of political beliefs, terms like “white supremacists,” “neo-Nazis,” and “domestic terrorists” are being employed to tar the Left’s political opponents and those who threaten their stranglehold on power. If someone casts doubt on the results of the 2020 election, he is said to be a white supremacist and to side with Bull Connor. If someone questions the prevailing narratives about COVID-19 – including its origins in a Chinese wet market, or the safety and efficacy of vaccines – then that person is xenophobic or a potential domestic terrorist.

This incendiary rhetoric is nothing new in the American political discourse. What *is* new is the eagerness that this administration displays in embracing it for the purpose of exiling its political opponents from the public sphere. In what can only be described as modern-day McCarthyism, the

administration seeks to label their opposition as radical right-wing racists and then use the power of the state to crush them. The political Left has learned that they do not have to debate the issues if a large segment of the population believes that there is a constant and growing threat of white supremacists, neo-Nazis, fascists, and domestic terrorists. So they do not debate. They destroy.

This does not overstate the situation. Just last October, on the advice of the National School Board Association, Attorney General Merrick Garland released a memo directing the FBI and U.S. Attorneys to convene in every federal judicial district to discuss strategies for addressing threats against school administrators. This was a breathtakingly transparent attempt to chill the First Amendment rights of concerned parents speaking out against racist indoctrination in schools and mask mandates. Despite prompting widespread outrage, the Attorney General has not retracted this memo.

Or take the example of Lt. Col. Matthew Lohmeier, the Space Force commanding officer who was relieved of duty last year for remarks he made decrying the growing influence of Marxist ideology, including Critical Race Theory, in the Armed Forces. Perhaps no other incident encapsulates the state of the military under the current administration: we now promote Marxism in the military and then proceed to punish those who call it out. Lohmeier's supervisor stated that his separation occurred because of a loss of confidence in his ability to lead. Yet, we know the real reason he was discharged – it was because of a loss of confidence that he held the right political views. Years of service by a patriotic American, down the drain because of a desire at the top to impose ideological purity on the U.S. military.

The message from the Biden Administration is clear: whether you are a commanding officer or simply a concerned parent, if you speak out against their policies, you are no longer merely someone with a political disagreement. Instead, you are a potential domestic terrorist and will be treated accordingly. This abuse of government power for political ends, across multiple fronts, is unparalleled in our history – with only the Alien and Sedition Acts and McCarthyism coming close.

Fortunately, the Constitution gives Congress the power to make rules for the Armed Forces. I urge my colleagues to strongly consider the dangers of giving the Executive Branch the unilateral authority to purge “domestic extremists” and the exclusive power to define what that means. If recent history is any indication, the definition will be broad enough to sweep up servicemembers who participate in “right-leaning” activities yet somehow narrow enough to spare many of those on the left. To put it another way – a member of Antifa who joins the military need not worry about being dishonorably discharged because of their participation in “extremist activities”. Not so with a soldier who shares an online meme making fun of Critical Race Theory – that soldier had better watch out. I fully expect that if Congress once again cedes its authority to the Executive Branch by empowering Secretary Austin to discharge servicemembers because of “extremist” views, he will act with all the discretion and impartiality of a Twitter moderator.

Therefore, I implore my colleagues to reject any language in the NDAA that gives the Biden Administration exclusive authority to purge “political extremists” from the Armed Forces. Even

“must-pass” legislation must not be allowed to pass if it includes provisions that threaten civilian control of our military.

Thank you again for allowing me the opportunity to testify on this critical issue.