

THIS TIME, WE WERE WARNED

I noted after the Aurora shooting that trying to make sense of senseless violence gives us a way to avoid confronting what Michael Moore described as our culture's violent nature.

But this time around, the documented ties between the killer, Wade Michael Page, and Neo-Nazi groups provides an easy narrative.

Which deservedly focuses attention—not just on our easy gun culture and our propensity to translate insecurities into hate—on the warnings we had, both about Sikhs being targeted by hate groups and about the military's struggle to keep white supremacists out of the military and away from recruiting veterans.

92 Members of Congress ask the FBI to start tracking Sikh hate crimes

It was just a few months ago, after all, that 92 members of Congress (with Dan Lungren as the only Republican) sent a letter to Eric Holder noting that Sikhs are among the most commonly targeted for hate crimes (largely because of the turbans they wear), and asking him to add Sikhs to the FBI's hate crime data collection form.

White supremacists increasingly recruit veterans

Meanwhile, both the Southern Poverty Law Center (which has temporarily crashed) and the FBI have revealed that they knew of Page and his white supremacist leanings.

It's unclear whether Page embraced racism during his service or afterwards. He served at Fort Bragg at the same time as a group of skinheads committed murders in the area. And he was discharged because of misconduct.

At the same time, the FBI and DHS have collected increasing evidence that white supremacists are recruiting veterans, largely to capitalize on their training.

Military experience—ranging from failure at basic training to success in special operations forces—is found throughout the white supremacist extremist movement. FBI reporting indicates extremist leaders have historically favored recruiting active and former military personnel for their knowledge of firearms, explosives, and tactical skills and their access to weapons and intelligence in preparation for an anticipated war against the federal government, Jews, and people of color. FBI cases also document instances of active duty military personnel having volunteered their professional resources to white supremacist causes.

Now, as I said, none of this makes the killing of a bunch of people as they prepare to worship any more logical. It's ultimately almost certainly about hate, albeit hate that was public and known.

But it's also an indicator that the almost unitary focus on Muslim terrorism ignores a lot of dangers. Some of that is definable and easy to see, such as the hatred of Wade Page. Some of it is harder to understand, such as the seeming pathology of James Holmes.

Either way, too many people are engaging in senseless violence in our country, and we're not doing the obvious things to stop it.