

DHS Report Was a Threat Assessment, Not Accusation

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WASHINGTON — The leader of the nation's largest combat veterans' organization said a leaked government document that mentions disgruntled military veterans as potential security threats should have been worded differently, but he takes no issue with the document's purpose: to assess possible threats to the safety and security of the United States.

"A government that does not assess internal and external security threats would be negligent of a critical public responsibility," said Glen M. Gardner Jr., the national commander of the 2.2 million-member Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. and its Auxiliaries.

At issue is an April 7, 2009, Department of Homeland Security document, entitled, "Rightwing Extremism: Current Economic and Political Climate Fueling Resurgence in Radicalization and Recruitment."

The report, which is unclassified but marked "For Official Use Only," surfaced Monday and is causing a furor within some veterans' communities and the news media. It lists disgruntled military veterans as being possible security threats, either by acting as lone wolves or as being targeted for recruitment into rightwing extremist groups who are hate-oriented (religious, racial or ethnic), or driven by domestic issues ranging from the economy and gun control to illegal immigration and abortion, among others.

"The report proves that DHS is doing its job, and that's to protect America and Americans," said Gardner, a Vietnam veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps from Round Rock, Texas.

"The report should have been worded differently, but it made no blanket accusation that every soldier was capable of being a traitor like Benedict Arnold, or every veteran could be a lone wolf, homegrown terrorist like Timothy McVeigh. It was just an assessment about possibilities that could take place," said Gardner.

"That's how successful military campaigns are waged, and that's exactly how our nation must be protected. You try to plan for every possible wildcard scenario, and then you adjust

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your plans accordingly."

The VFW national commander hopes DHS tones down the disgruntled military veteran angle in its next edition, and includes other professionals who have paramilitary training, such as the police, Secret Service, FBI, and DHS' own Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents.

[Click here to read the DHS assessment report.](#)