

VICE News

Neo-Nazi Terror Group Harboring Missing Ex-Soldier: Sources

Patrik Mathews, an ex-soldier from Canada that disappeared in August, allegedly illegally entered the U.S. with the help of The Base and is now in hiding.

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According to information VICE has learned from confidential sources, a U.S.-based neo-Nazi terrorist group is currently harbouring a missing ex-soldier from Canada.

The information suggests members of The Base are hiding Patrik Mathews, 26, whose whereabouts have been the focus of much speculation. Mathews allegedly crossed into the U.S. illegally from his native Manitoba with the help of the group, which has since taken steps to conceal his location.

Mathews went missing after being outed as a recruiter and organizer for The Base by *Winnipeg Free Press* reporter Ryan Thorpe. Federal authorities raided his home and seized multiple firearms. The former soldier was last seen by his family on August 24 with his abandoned car found less than 10 miles from the American border shortly thereafter.

The news illustrates how The Base, previously a mostly online collective of hardcore neo-Nazis, is evolving into a bonafide terror network with a recruitment structure, a paramilitary training apparatus, and the capacity to covertly ferry members across international borders to fit its insurgent ambitions.

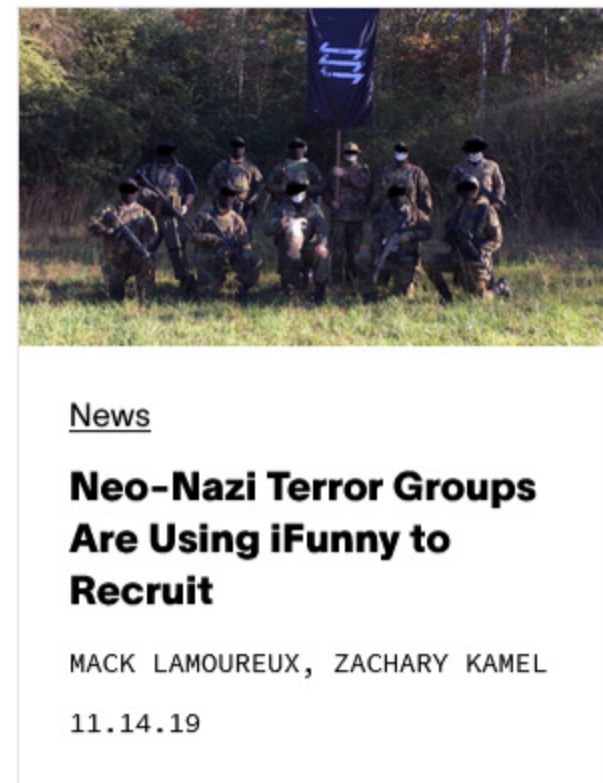
While not charged with any crimes, U.S. police warned the public not to approach Mathews if he was spotted. When asked about the current status of Mathews, the FBI declined to comment.

The RCMP, the Canadian federal police, wouldn't comment on Mathews' presence in the U.S., reiterating the former soldier was still the subject of a missing person's investigation and urging anyone with information on his location to contact them. A source in the Department of National Defence in Canada confirmed to VICE that military intelligence has an open investigation into Mathews.

VICE, which obtained the encrypted contacts for The Base, requested comment multiple times, but never received a response from the group. Soon after those messages were sent, two social media accounts affiliated to The Base posted a death threat against a VICE journalist.

Recently, an anti-racist organization in Canada heavily criticized authorities for not taking the pursuit of Mathews seriously. A 2018 VICE investigation documented the internal machinations of The Base, which is purportedly led by an Afghanistan and Iraq war veteran, as members exchanged bomb-making and weapons manuals and discussed plans for future terrorist attacks.

Other information VICE has learned points to Mathews participating in a combat training camp with close to a dozen members of The Base in Georgia this fall, where he allegedly helped train other members of the group. As a combat engineer, Mathews was taught explosives and weapons skills during his career in the Canadian Armed Forces Reserve at 38 Canadian Brigade Group in Winnipeg.



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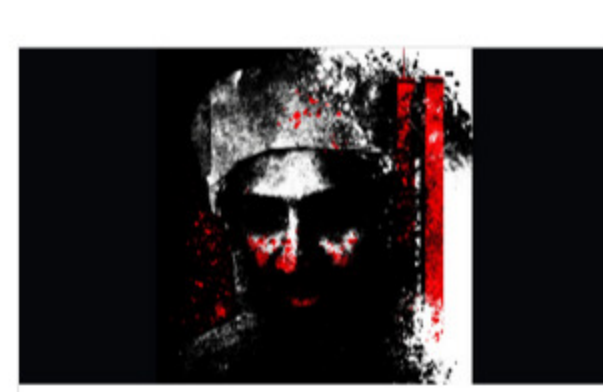
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VICE also learned members of The Base have openly discussed "direct action," a term used to describe terror attacks in white nationalist circles and a key feature of the brand of violent neo-Nazism the group espouses.

Joshua Fisher-Birch, a research analyst specializing in white nationalist terrorism at the Counter Extremism Project, said that if Mathews was an ISIS member the significance of his alleged, illegal entry into the U.S. and his training of other members would have likely garnered a more extreme response from authorities.

"Had Mathews pledged his allegiance to ISIS, instead of joining The Base, there is a high likelihood that more resources would have been spent to try and locate him," he said. "The operation to move and protect Mathews endangers public safety and it's particularly significant because of his military training and experience and the fact that he crossed an international border. Mathews' weapons and explosives training from his time in Canada's armed forces, and that he is passing these skills on to his fellow neo-Nazis is particularly dangerous."



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Last month, the FBI arrested one of The Base's members for allegedly using the group's encrypted communications network to plan and recruit for a national vandalism campaign against American synagogues—a frequent target of violent white nationalists. However, many in the group have conceded that The Base isn't yet capable of undertaking covert attacks, though it is growing in its capacities.

Do you have information about far-right extremists and groups including The Base? We'd love to hear from you. You can contact Mack Lamoureux securely on Signal on +1 780-504-8369, on Wire at @mlamoureux, or by email at mack.lamoureux@vice.com

While it describes itself as a "survivalist" collective, The Base is a global, accelerationist organization intending to hasten the collapse of society through a future armed insurgency, and establish a caucasian ethno-state from the chaos of a "race war." The Base is unique in the extreme-right ecosystem as it aims to create a coalition of online neo-Nazis, pooling members from street skinheads to other U.S. based neo-Nazi groups like Atomwaffen Division, which has already been linked to a string of murders.

The Base has released a spate of violent propaganda online as it attempts to expand and recruit new members to its cause. The latest in video, posted this week, showed scenes of heavily armed, masked men in military fatigues training in several paramilitary exercises, ending with death threats towards VICE reporters and other journalists who have covered the group.

In the past six months, U.S. federal investigations against white nationalists have spiked, as authorities worry the upcoming 2020 presidential election will inspire a surge in homegrown terror attacks.

Fisher-Birch pointed out that the group's blatant disregard for federal laws and its undertaking of organized paramilitary training on U.S. soil represents a serious threat to public safety.

"One of The Base's mottos is 'learn, train, fight' and they have already done the first two; it's of vital importance that the group is disrupted and stopped before they commit a deadly attack."

Follow Ben Makuch, Mack Lamoureux, and Zachary Kamel on Twitter.

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