



# SOUNDS LIKE HATE

a podcast by the Southern Poverty Law Center

## Baseless Final Script PART ONE

**Rinaldo Nazzaro:** Ecologist, can you hear me?

**Speaker 70:** Yes.

**Rinaldo Nazzaro:** We've, uh, heard a bit about your group and we understand that you want to form some sort of, kind of, cooperation. Just tell us a little about yourself.

**Congresswoman Jackie Speier:** The Base is an accelerationist, paganistic, anarchic group.

**Speaker 70:** All right. Well, I'm out here in Oregon. Uhm, with everything that was going on in politics and just, you know, the disappearance of whites around the world has really got me going.

**Rinaldo Nazzaro:** Yeah. Are you uhm... Well what's your ethnicity?

**Speaker 70:** I'm white. I am part Norwegian, part Sweden, and German.

**Congresswoman Jackie Speier:** They hate Jews and African-Americans. Their goal is to use terrorism to start a race war and collapse the United States. Triggering societal collapse may be a sick fantasy, but the reality is that domestic terror has claimed more lives than international terror since 9/11.

**Rinaldo Nazzaro:** Uhm, alright, so you've been a national socialist for three years you said. What were you before that?

**Speaker 70:** Uhm, I was Republican.

**Congresswoman Jackie Speier:** They aren't your parents' neo-nazis.

**Ecologist:** Well, a lot of our guys, we have just a pure hatred for the modern civilization and industrialization. We wish to liberate ourselves, our fellow whites, and animals from that system.

**Rinaldo Nazzaro:** How does that work?

**Ecologist:** Through economic sabotage, such as bombings, arson... uhm.

**Rinaldo Nazzaro:** Woah, woah, woah woah. Okay. Alright. Slow down there a little bit.

**Geraldine Moriba:** *Sounds Like Hate* is a new podcast series from the Southern Poverty Law Center. I'm Geraldine Moriba.

**Jamila Paksima:** And I'm Jamila Paksima. This first season is about how some people become extremists, and how some of them disengage from a life of hatred.

**Rinaldo Nazzaro:** I don't recommend, you know, being kind of so cavalier about that type of thing, uhm, 'cause you could really land yourself a lot of trouble.

**Geraldine Moriba:** *Baseless* is the title of this three-part story. This is the voice of an actual neo-nazi interviewing another neo-nazi for membership in a group called the Base. These are secret audio recordings made inside their "vetting room," on Wire, an encrypted app. Here's what white supremacists say when they hope no one is listening.

**Ecologist:** I later formed Green Brigade as a reactionary movement to what's going on in an environment.

**Rinaldo Nazzaro:** What are the core values of the Green Brigade?

**Ecologist:** Direct action is a big one.

**Rinaldo Nazzaro:** How many members do you have so far?

**Ecologist:** Uhm, we had 40, but those dropped and now we're down to about like less than 20.

**Rinaldo Nazzaro:** Why did they drop?

**Ecologist:** Because when I was talking about forming an alliance with the Base with people that we're in the Base, they wanted us to go through, all of our members to go through your vetting system.

**Geraldine Moriba:** These Base recordings of the Base cover a two-year period starting February 2018.

**Megan Squire:** Having a primary source like that and these people actually talking to one another, unfiltered and unaware, I think that's extremely valuable.

**Jamila Paksima:** A warning to our listeners: Much of what you'll hear will be disturbing. These recordings contain offensive language, exaggerated statements about their own lives, and discussions about the violent collapse of America.

**Geraldine Moriba:** In this first part, you will hear the ways members of the U.S. Armed Forces are being recruited for their combat expertise.

**Jamila Paksima:** Then, in part two, using artificial intelligence, we search for the truth buried within the recordings of the Base's "vetting room." The results reveal a lot about their recruiting tactics, their fear of the FBI, and their covert plots.

**Geraldine Moriba:** And in part three, we report on how the FBI infiltrated their inner circles only days before a planned armed confrontation to accelerate a race war.

**Rinaldo Nazzaro:** We're looking for guys who are willing to accept a degree of risk and believe that what we're trying to do is worth it.

**Geraldine Moriba:** There are over 100 people in these secret recordings. We listened to every minute of every one of them. This is the Ecologist. He's a 20 year old living in Oregon. He's being interviewed by the leader of the Base, and presenting his best case for admission.

**Rinaldo Nazzaro:** What's your ethnicity?

**Ecologist:** I'm white. I am part Norwegian, part Sweden, and German.

**Geraldine Moriba:** "Norman Spear" and "Roman Wolf" are the aliases of the leader of this domestic terror group.

**Ecologist:** Uhm, the reason why I wanted to join the Base is I wanna to fight for my future and for the future of my children and what not.

**Geraldine Moriba:** He's the one asking the questions on these vetting calls. His real name is Rinaldo Nazzaro.

**Rinaldo Nazzaro:** What do you know of the Base?

**Ecologist:** Uh, I know that you're focused on survival and combat skills, I believe for the political-socio collapse. You know, I see how you look, you know, the military style that you present yourselves as, but I don't really know, like, the core values, I guess I would say.

**Rinaldo Nazzaro:** Where are you the strongest now? Where guys are meeting up?

**Ecologist:** The strongest is in the Midwest. Almost all of our guys are there, to be honest. We have a lot there.

**Rinaldo Nazzaro:** What about in Pacific Northwest?

**Ecologist:** Uhm, Pacific Northwest? There is me and one other.

**Geraldine Moriba:** Much of what you hear Nazzaro doing on these calls is selling the idea of the Base.

**Rinaldo Nazzaro:** We consider ourselves more of a network. We're open to people who have membership in other organizations.

**Ecologist:** Uh huh.

**Rinaldo Nazzaro:** And the more like-minded guys that we can pull together that have... that have the motivation to get out there in real life and train, uhm, that makes us all stronger. Come into the network and they can take full advantage of any kind of knowledge or training in meetups and networking. We want to be in the position where we're ready, we're prepared enough... ready enough that we can take advantage of whatever chaos or, uhm, power vacuum that might emerge.

**Ecologist:** Sure.

**Rinaldo Nazzaro:** Most of us are national socialists, but there are others who just consider themselves white nationalists. Uhm, so, I mean, being pro-white is the number one criteria.

**Jamila Paksima:** Along with our reporting, investigations from other news outlets, including ProPublica, the Guardian, The New Yorker, BBC, Vice, and others, have uncovered additional facts about Rinaldo Nazzaro and the Base. Here is what we know. Nazzaro is 47 years old. He went to Villanova University and says he served in Afghanistan. He claims to have worked for American intelligence agencies as a contractor. And at one point, he owned a security company registered in New York City. Nazzaro avoided law enforcement and media attention until he started posting “how to” online videos on guerilla warfare and building weaponry.

**Rinaldo Nazzaro:** It’s gonna be really tough at that point.

**Jamila Paksima:** Then in late 2017, he began showing up on podcasts and Twitter, talking about the collapse of American society and the need for a white ethnostate.

**Rinaldo Nazzaro:** I mean, obviously, the ideal solution, if we could just kind of wave a magic wand, would be like, yeah, we would be able to take control of the government and just maintain the current boundaries of the United States.

**Jamila Paksima:** Nazzaro professed to be a national socialist, or a nazi, and began recruiting people to his side. This was the beginning of the Base. It was also right around the time when he left the United States and moved with his Russian wife and two kids to St. Petersburg, Russia.

**Geraldine Moriba:** Jamila, what motivates people to go to the extreme of forming a white power group?

**Jamila Paksima:** I want to know the answer to that question too. It’s why I contacted Cassie Miller.

**Cassie Miller:** I first saw him kind of have a growing presence on Twitter.

**Jamila Paksima:** She has a Ph.D in American history and is a senior research analyst at the Southern Poverty Law Center.

**Cassie Miller:** Rinaldo Nazzaro, using the name Norman Spear or later Roman Wolf, was appearing on social media, kind of dismissing those ideas entirely, saying that there were no actual political ways to achieve a fascist state that was built on ethnonationalism. What they needed was revolution and revolution required violence. I can also talk about how we got his name. He bought land in central Washington and his name was on those documents.

**Jamila Paksima:** And this is the land he bought for \$33,000.

**Cassie Miller:** Right.

**Jamila Paksima:** Where is this land?

**Cassie Miller:** It’s in Republic, Washington. It’s in an extremely rural area. It doesn’t have any sort of infrastructure. It’s actually zoned for agriculture, and from what we know from the recordings that we have is that this was meant to be kind of a place for training and perhaps, eventually, you know, a place for people to settle.

**Rinaldo Nazzaro:** I own 30. And it’s adjacent to 40 of public land. So it’s not that big.

**Geraldine Moriba:** Nazzaro mentions the Pacific Northwest and the acres property he owns 37 times on these vetting calls. It seems to be part of his recruiting strategy, like he's trying to convince the group he's building a safe haven for escape and training.

**Cassie Miller:** The idea that...

**Jamila Paksima:** Miller says states in the Northwest have been seen by white supremacists as desirable areas of the country for decades. And groups, like the Base, who are aiming to speed up the race war are called accelerationists.

**Cassie Miller:** And with white people eventually becoming a minority in the United States, that they wouldn't actually have a way to achieve the kind of political power that they needed. That the system itself was to blame and that it needed to go. And so what the Base talks about is bringing about system collapse. They see modern democracies as corrupted and irredeemable, and the only way to move forward is to dismantle them through acts of violence aimed at the state or at groups of individuals that they see as their enemies.

**Rinaldo Nazzaro:** We are survivalism, a self-defense network. Our mission's very, very simple. It is, uhm, training and networking, preparing for collapse. We want to be in a position where we're ready, we're prepared enough, ready enough that we can take advantage of uhm, whatever chaos, power vacuum, that might emerge. We want to try and fill that power vacuum and take advantage of the chaos.

**Ecologist:** I am from California. Uhm, I am currently attending college.

**Geraldine Moriba:** This is one of the four recruits the Ecologist introduces to the Base.

**Ecologist:** I've been a national socialist for probably five years. I have a good amount of friends who are as well. I own a firearm.

**Rinaldo Nazzaro:** Alright, do you think that the masses can be red-pilled?

**Ecologist:** No. I think...

**Geraldine Moriba:** The word "red-pilled" comes from the movie *The Matrix*.

**Ecologist:** Only people of exceptional intelligence can be. I think the masses will come over once we win.

**Geraldine Moriba:** It's used by the far right to mean an awakening to white power ideology.

**Rinaldo Nazzaro:** What was a redpilling moment for you in your life?

**Ecologist:** It was overall just growing up in California. I was surrounded by mostly like, Filipinos, Asians, Mexicans, Blacks, and just watching how they behave and watching, like, I don't know, occasionally, like, white women inter-mingle with them. It just disgusted me.

**Geraldine Moriba:** Here's another college-aged recruit from the Green Brigade, the group the Ecologist started.

**Speaker 71:** I guess, for the most part, it was my best friend and roommate who's part of the Base.

**Rinaldo Nazzaro:** Uh hm.

**Speaker 71:** Uhm. Yeah, we... he was Catholic at that time, too, but significantly more racist than I was.

**Rinaldo Nazzaro:** Were you sort of like a very devout type of Catholic or what?

**Speaker 71:** Oh, yeah, like, my family's Catholic. I grew up Catholic.

**Rinaldo Nazzaro:** Okay. Alright so, what made you switch to paganism?

**Speaker 71:** Pretty much just accepting that Catholicism was not the best thing for our people. I realized that, like, if it came down to it, I'd choose... I'd choose my race over my religion. And so I realized I couldn't really be Catholic anymore.

**Geraldine Moriba:** The recruits on these recordings claim to live in 26 different states, and participate in small, two-or-three person cells in every quadrant of America. An additional eight countries were represented on these calls.

**Jamila Paksima:** Geraldine, the countries with the most recruits include Canada, United Kingdom, and Australia.

**Cassie Miller:** They want people to believe that this is a highly sophisticated terror network and they have this really strict internal discipline. They have really good OPSEC. But it turns out that very little of this is true.

**Jamila Paksima:** OPSEC is an abbreviation of the words "operations security." It's military talk for protecting yourself from enemy intelligence. It comes up on almost every recruiting call.

**Cassie Miller:** They accepted almost everyone who applied.

**Jamila Paksima:** According to Miller, the Base has a very high acceptance rate.

**Cassie Miller:** They were looking for quality over quantity in their ranks, but actually doesn't seem to be the case. There were, you know, oftentimes a lot of red flags that they would just ignore.

**Ecologist:** Uh, through economic sabotage, such as bombings, arson.

**Rinaldo Nazzaro:** Whoa, whoa, whoa... Okay, alright. Let's slow down there a little bit, uhm.

**Ecologist:** Yeah, I know.

**Cassie Miller:** That kind of violence that the Ecologist is talking about is very much the core strategy that defines the group.

**Rinaldo Nazzaro:** What people decide to do outside the Base with that training and contacts they make is their business. You know, and we don't really need to know about it. I mean, sure, it's kind of better that we don't for everyone's sake and for everyone's success.

**Cassie Miller:** I think they were kind of constantly nervous about being infiltrated, and it created this really strong sense of paranoia because they were worried that everyone around them was an informant.

**Rinaldo Nazzaro:** Basically the enemy is, like, circling, like, vultures overhead constantly. We are, you know, heavily monitored by the feds, by the media, constantly trying to disrupt us, try to infiltrate. So, maybe you don't want that kind of, to be associated with a group that has that type of attention on it. If you are as open as you're being right now about it, I mean chances are, you're gonna land yourself in, like, some pretty deep hot water I would imagine at some point. So, we've had guys who have had visits from the feds. They have not been arrested, though. And we have guys who, a couple guys at least, that we know of, that are under investigation, so we have to operate with that in mind.

**Cassie Miller:** A lot of times they found that someone was maybe, you know, had some potential, but they were unsure of their commitment.

**Jamila Paksima:** Miller has listened to many of these calls looking for patterns in the vetting process.

**Cassie Miller:** They would have them go and do something like put up fliers to prove that they were actually committed to the group.

**Jamila Paksima:** She says flyering was mostly an assignment for younger applicants.

**Rinaldo Nazzaro:** He's got, like, a pool of potential recruits, like, at his doorstep.

**Jamila Paksima:** They were instructed to post flyers around schools or on campus and photograph them on location as proof of mission complete.

**Cassie Miller:** And they would often have someone go and meet with the person in person to kind of give it another layer of vetting.

**Jamila Paksima:** I spoke to someone who was vetted by Nazzaro.

**Ryan Thorpe:** It didn't take me long to clue into what these folks were about.

**Jamila Paksima:** Ryan Thorpe is a Canadian reporter with the Winnipeg Free Press. He says on July 25th, 2019, flyers started showing up in his city, including the area around a military base.

**Ryan Thorpe:** That would have either one or multiple multiple photos of individuals, uh, decked out in military fatigues wearing the kind of skull mask that I subsequently learned has, is associated with a kind of neo-nazi, accelerationist circles.

**Jamila Paksima:** Thorpe posed as a white nationalist to gain access inside the Base. His vetting process began when he responded to the email address on a flyer.

**Ryan Thorpe:** They had slogans, like, "Save your race, join the Base," "Learn, train, fight, organize," kind of tag lines.

**Jamila Paksima:** Thorpe had never gone undercover before.

**Ryan Thorpe:** They asked for my name.

**Jamila Paksima: He did a self-taught crash course on the Base and their beliefs before filling out the application circulating on social media.**

**Ryan Thorpe:** They asked for my age. They asked for my ethnicity. They asked about my physical condition. They wanted to know if I had firearm training, if I had a military background. By the time I got back into work the next day, I had gotten a response...

**Jamila Paksima: He communicated for several days by email with Nazzaro, who asked him to download the encrypted app, Wire.**

**Ryan Thorpe:** It wasn't until, uh, I got deeper into the vetting process for potential members that I determined that this individual was going by the name Roman Wolf, which was the pseudonym at the time that the founder was using.

**Jamila Paksima: Thorpe's next step: A vetting phone call with a group of Base members and Nazzaro. This is an excerpt from Thorpe's own recording.**

**Rinaldo Nazzaro:** Officially, the Base is pro-white. I mean, that's our primary, uhm, that's really our primary criteria.

**Ryan Thorpe:** I was being put to the test for the first time in this process and kind of a substantive way. I was incredibly nervous going into that phone call. I've been developing this false persona this entire time. At about 1 or 2 p.m. the next day, I'm working in the newsroom, and I get a message from the founder, Roman Wolf, who says you did good last night.

**Rinaldo Nazzaro:** I mean, you're going to go to the military and from the training that you are planning on getting, that will be very valuable.

**Speaker 44:** I know that'll come, like, handy down the road when it comes to, you know, ballistic type shit, handmade weapons, stuff like that.

**Jamila Paksima: In the vetting calls, we found three recruits who say they first gained interest in survivalism and weapons as Boy Scouts.**

**Rinaldo Nazzaro:** So, how old are you?

**Speaker 60:** Nineteen. So, I was in Boy Scouts. I made it all the way through that.

**Rinaldo Nazzaro:** When you say you made it all the way through, you mean you were an Eagle Scout?

**Speaker 60:** Yeah.

**Rinaldo Nazzaro:** Okay.

**Speaker 60:** In terms of firearms, I recently purchased one of my own. I have an AR-15. Uhm, I practiced with it for a few weekends.



**Jamila Paksima:** “Be prepared” is the Scout’s motto. But the Boy Scouts of America tell us “there is no place for racism, violence, hate speech, bullying or harassment of any kind – not in scouting and not in our communities.” Still their cornerstone value suits the Base’s mission for military preparedness. In fact, nearly 20% of applicants claim to have combat training, including Nazzaro. They served or were active duty servicemen.

**Speaker 11:** I go off to deploy in July and that will be for 15 months, but then I will be back.

**Jamila Paksima:** They were all ideal candidates to lead paramilitary trainings.

**Speaker 11:** But, yeah, I’m a 19 kilo, so I do tank shit. I’m, I basically am an operator of the M1-8 state crewman.

**Rinaldo Nazzaro:** Right. But I mean, you know, even when you do deploy, I’m assuming that you’ll still be able to maintain contact with us.

**Speaker 11:** Through the internet, yes.

**Rinaldo Nazzaro:** What’s your MOS?

**Speaker 45:** Thirty Five Tango. IT for Military Intelligence.

**Speaker 113:** The unit I’m with is a cavalry unit, but yeah, it is a combat arms unit, overall. I’ve actually done a bit of reconnaissance training through the Army itself, as well, land navigation, OPs, stuff like that. I did six months at Fort Benning training up, combat arms style. I’m sure that can be applied somewhere.

**Speaker 72:** I was a squad leader of 17 people. Probably one of the most prophetic things, you know, because like it shows, it really does. I have leadership skills that I learned through what the corps gave me.

**Congresswoman Jackie Speier:** First, white supremacist terror groups and communities value military skills that would enable them to commit terrorism or fight a race war.

**Jamila Paksima:** At the House subcommittee hearing on incidents of white supremacy in the military in early 2020, committee chair and Congresswoman Jackie Speier had a lot to say about the vulnerability of the U.S. Armed Forces.

**Congresswoman Jackie Speier:** They recruit vets to join and train their members, seek to infiltrate sympathizers into the military, and many members claim to have military experience. This doesn’t make white supremacist terror groups unique. Al-Qaeda also recruited members of the Egyptian and Saudi militaries. Second, there are several warning signs that individuals with white nationalist and supremacist tendencies are, in fact, serving in our military.

**Speaker 60:** I’m just curious about this: are you guys named after al-Qaeda?

**Rinaldo Nazzaro:** (*Laughing*) No, it’s just the Base, as in base camp. I mean, I don’t think anyone who’s a member speaks Arabic, so..

**Speaker 60:** Well, al-Qaeda is Arabic for the base.

**Rinaldo Nazzaro:** Right. It's like reverse engineering the English language into some other language that it's kind of silly. They want to paint us to be terrorists.

**Geraldine Moriba:** But the Arabic translation of the words the base is al-Qaeda. And like al-Qaeda, the Base also believes violence is the only option to achieve their goals. They spend 80 percent of these recordings discussing guns and the collapse of America, and yet, for all the propaganda the Base posts about being militaristic and armed, they're pretty paranoid.

**Rinaldo Nazzaro:** Well, you contacted us, okay?

**Speaker 43:** That's true.

**Rinaldo Nazzaro:** Not the other way around.

**Speaker 43:** That's true.

**Rinaldo Nazzaro:** Exactly. So, you agreed to submit yourself to this process. So, now you're in the process. So, if you're gonna to do it, do it. If you're not gonna to do it, if you've got reservations about it, don't waste our time.

**Geraldine Moriba:** There's a lot of talk about getting doxxed. That's when private information about someone is shared publicly on the internet intending harm.

**Speaker 113:** My main concern is, basically, what defenses are being set up to prevent like a mass dox?

**Rinaldo Nazzaro:** Well, I mean, the first line of defense is the vetting process.

**Speaker 113:** Of course.

**Rinaldo Nazzaro:** You know, our security philosophy is essentially that the vetting never stops. I mean, we always need to be kind of monitoring. Using common sense.

**Jamila Paksima:** There are other encrypted apps Base members use for planning activities, sharing racist theories, and basic "shit talking," as they like to call it.

**Geraldine Moriba:** These secret recordings were all made on Wire. while keeping information secure and private, it provides protection for domestic terrorists to communicate freely. Yet, on these vetting calls with outsiders they still worry about Antifa, a word for anti-facist and leftist. the base demonizes them, and targets them with violence.

**Jamila Paksima:** Geraldine, the Base has been doxxed and infiltrated before.

**Geraldine Moriba:** Yes, but because of their decentralized structure it hasn't stopped them so far.

**Speaker 14:** Has the FBI, like, ever tried to get, like, someone in your group?

**Rinaldo Nazaro:** I mean, the vetting really never stops. You know, so we always kind of have our guard up. And it's always a potential threat, you know, because we are on the radar. We are.. the entire system is gunning for us from the, you know, from the journalists, to the Jewish NGOs, to the feds.

**Jamila Paksima:** To achieve deeper analysis of these recordings we applied machine learning techniques. You've been listening to our findings. Here's another.

**Rinaldo Nazzaro:** Yeah. Where they painted us as being a terrorist organization, planning attacks, which is not the case.

**Jamila Paksima:** They also talk a lot about being targeted by the system, the police, government, and the media. In fact, the term "targeted" occurs in 45 percent of the recordings.

**Rinaldo Nazzaro:** The thing is this though, we're not doing anything illegal.

**Geraldine Moriba:** And the phrase "not doing anything illegal" shows up in 30 percent of the conversations.

**Rinaldo Nazzaro:** It's a network. And it's specifically to get people together for survival and self-defense. That's it. I mean, there's nothing illegal about it in Russia or any other country.

**Mike German:** My name's Mike German. I'm a fellow with the Brennan Center for Justice at NYU Law School. I previously served 16 years as an FBI special agent, and what I learned was there were a lot of people who believed in the ideology of white supremacy or some other far-right, fascist ideologies, but it was a small segment of people who were actually engaged in illegal activity and particularly violent activity. You often see these groups changing names fairly regularly to avoid association with the criminal activities of their previous colleagues. And even within a phantom cell, there could be cells within that cell.

**Geraldine Moriba:** German says, by claiming to be leaderless and having small cells, it makes it possible for one group to be involved in their own criminal activity and for another group to be involved in different ones. This way they're toeing the line of illegality, making it possible for each cell to claim not to have any knowledge of the actions of other cells, should any criminal investigations or charges be raised.

**Geraldine Moriba:** The Base describes themselves as survivalists. That sounds like they're gonna go out camping and have marshmallows.

**Mike German:** They're talking about the survival of the white race. Part of the way these groups organize to avoid the stigma associated with white supremacy is to try to present themselves in a way that appeals to a broader audience. Many militant groups believe, regardless of the ideology, is that their viewpoint will dominate once it's given the chance and what needs to happen is some kind of cleansing war. Once this cataclysmic event happens or this war starts, all white people will join with them and they will be seen as the vanguard and the leaders of the defense of white people and that will result in this utopian white society.

**Ryan Thorpe:** Roman Wolf says the last step is to meet our local guy in person.

**Jamila Paksima:** Journalist Thorpe knew he was joining a group trying to set off a cataclysmic race war. The next step was an in-person meetup with a local member in Winnipeg.

**Ryan Thorpe:** They did tell me that, you know, you're lucky because there is someone else in your area that is already with us, so you wouldn't have to build something from scratch, you would immediately have a comrade in arms.

**Jamila Paksima:** Did he have a name?

**Ryan Thorpe:** Yes, he was going by Dave Arcturum. Uhm, was his pseudonym. So, he suggests a park, which is, like, way out on the edge of Winnipeg, and I just felt uneasy about that, so, I suggested a more centrally located park.

**Jamila Paksima:** Thorpe says he had to make careful considerations not to raise suspicions that he worked at the Winnipeg Free Press. He's written about white supremacy before. So, since his photo runs with his column he shaved his facial hair and he decided to show up at the park without ID, or a phone, or a back up.

**Ryan Thorpe:** I can't bring an audio recorder when he pats me down.

**Jamila Paksima:** He had no physical description of Dave, the Base member he was about to meet in Whittier Park in Winnipeg at 8 p.m. on a weekday.

**Ryan Thorpe:** Finally, someone does walk up to me. It's an individual who's about five-ten in height.

**Jamila Paksima:** He said Dave had thick, dirty blond hair, shaved close at the sides, long on top, a bushy beard, and a backpack.

**Ryan Thorpe:** Pretty quickly he tells me, "Well, we're gonna to be working quite close with one another from here on out. So, what if we just drop the pseudonyms and go by our first names."

**Jamila Paksima:** Thorpe agrees.

**Ryan Thorpe:** You know, I put out my hand to shake his hand, and I'm like, "I'm Ryan." And he says, "I'm Patrik." We kind of head out into some of the more secluded areas of the park, so we can have more privacy talking. He tells me he's a combat engineer trained by the Canadian Armed Forces. He talks about going to the United States to engage in paramilitary training. He talks about committing violence against antifascist activists. And he also talks about engaging in sabotage, where one point in our conversation, there's a rail line that runs parallel to the park, and he openly talks about derailing a train.

**Jamila Paksima:** Thorpe learned they were both the same age, 26. He heard unexpected revelations about Patrik's personal life.

**Ryan Thorpe:** This was towards the end of our in-person meeting. It was like confessional. His relationship had fallen apart. And he revealed that it was with a Black woman. He seemed embarrassed about this fact. And then he had said that they had had a pregnancy scare towards the end of that relationship. And I'll never forget this. He said, "You know, the more I thought about it, the more I think I would like to be a father. The only problem is the kid would have only been half human."

**Jamila Paksima:** So, I'm really trying to wrap my head around this. How does someone who is such a racist end up in a relationship with a Black woman?

**Ryan Thorpe:** It's certainly shocking. I mean, human beings are strange creatures with the ability to compartmentalize, and to, you know, have cognitive dissonance and things like this.

**Megan Squire:** I'm Megan Squire. I teach computer science at Elon University, and my research area is on data science and data mining with particular application on our far-right, radical extremism.

**Geraldine Moriba: Megan Squire has collected a massive trove of information on far-right extremists from the internet. She collects data on sites where they share propaganda in plain sight, like Facebook or Telegram.**

**Megan Squire:** So, I had 10 different ideologies, about 2,000 different groups, about 700,000 different user accounts.

**Geraldine Moriba: The connections she finds helps track how often members of various hate groups crossover to a different group.**

**Megan Squire:** For example, if you were in a white nationalist group, how likely is it that you would also be in a, I don't know, anti-Semitic group or a anti-Muslim group or something like that? What I did find was that, especially in some ideologies, that people tend to kind of just stick with what they know. One of the most crossing over-ish, I guess, ideologies was the neo-nazis. They tended to crossover more. Now, what I found was because their groups were so small they tended to go into other groups, perhaps to recruit.

**Geraldine Moriba:** What do you know about the Base from your online work?

**Megan Squire:** And the first thing I noticed about that group was how similar it looked to some other groups, like Atomwaffen, their visual style is very similar.

**Geraldine Moriba: Atomwaffen Division began in 2015. It's another terroristic neo-nazi organization that fetishizes violence and the collapse of civilization.**

**Ali Winston:** The Base came up in around 2018.

**Geraldine Moriba: Ali Winston is an independent investigative journalist. He's also tracking this group.**

**Ali Winston:** Around the period of time when Atomwaffen Division's whole motif, their skull masks, their very unique, edgy, hyper-stylized propaganda had become quite widely known. And online the Base's social media accounts openly aped that aesthetic.

**Megan Squire:** The idea that they would meet in small, sort of cell-like groups, you know, four or five guys go out for shooting exercises, they definitely swap platforms, they jump around, especially under duress. That usually happens in a very sporadic, unplanned kind of way. It's very reactive.

**Ali Winston:** There's a certain countercultural aspect to the neo-fascist revival. And, you know, you want to be edgy, you want to be extreme. This is kind of, like, what teenagers do. It's something that young men do, especially. And to be a militant neo-nazi who wants to eliminate, you know, all Blacks, Jews, Latinos, LGBT folks, I mean, that's, frankly, is attractive to some people: guns, knives, explosives. That was always part of their appeal.

**Megan Squire:** So, both groups, Atomwaffen and the Base, tend to have these meetups where they practice shooting, training, we might say, for the upcoming race war that they hope will happen. And both groups I've noticed film these events and use the videos as propaganda, like ISIS, al-Qaeda, who also produce that kind of propaganda, showing off weapons and skill with weapons and then sort of promoting the idea that we need to get together in small groups and train for this upcoming battle.

**Geraldine Moriba:** Since its inception, Atomwaffen has been under scrutiny by journalists, antifascists groups, and law enforcement. With so many eyes watching, they kept switching online platforms. The Base copies this strategy.

**Megan Squire:** If it's for propaganda, they can use their private channels to talk about where they were moving for propaganda. So, let's say they were on Twitter and then they get removed from there. They would go to their Wire channel and be like, "Oh, guys, did you see, we all got kicked off Twitter, where should we go next to hassle people and put our propaganda?" And then someone will say, "Well, let's go to Telegram." And so, they'll move over there.

**Geraldine Moriba:** Then Atomwaffen, which had contempt for basically any other element of far-right extremists, posted an unexpected message online in 2018.

**Ali Winston:** One of the earliest images I remember seeing of the Base was two individuals posing in flecktarn camouflage, which is a pattern that Atomwaffen Division adopted as their own, wearing the skull masks. One guy was holding an Atomwaffen flag, another one was holding a new flag with the "three eihwaz runes" that came to signify the Base. The significance of that photograph was we are alike.

**Geraldine Moriba:** This would turn out to be the first of many significant alliances for the Base. Winston says it was a turning point. Now Atomwaffen members could also be members of the Base and it sent a signal to other groups to consider joining as well.

**Rinaldo Nazzaro:** If they get through, I mean, you can send as many guys as you want. We'd love to have 'em. You know, that's great. It's not an issue. It's up to you...

**Jamila Paksima:** That's what happened with the Ecologist. As Nazzaro anticipated, he was more than willing to recruit from his like-minded extremist friends, and members of his own acceleration group, Green Brigade.

**Ecologist:** I'm looking for just an alliance. Mutual respect from each group. If it's possible to work together, that's something I could be interested in.

**Rinaldo Nazzaro:** We'd love to have 'em. That's great. It's not an issue. I mean, it's up to you. I mean, not everyone may make the cut either, you know, so I wouldn't want you to be offended by that either. You know?

**Ecologist:** Yeah. Yeah, Yeah.

**Rinaldo Nazzaro:** But the guys who are, you know, who are, who do make it, you know, can come in and, like I said, participate in the network. I mean, the other guys who didn't make it from your larger organization can still benefit, uhm, indirectly from the knowledge that the guys who are in The Base get. They acquire knowledge, uhm, and they can impart that on the rest of the Green Brigade.

**Jamila Paksima:** At the end of this vetting call, they discuss whether the leader of the Green Brigade should be allowed in.

**Rinaldo Nazzaro:** What do you think?

**Speaker 12:** I don't know, man. I think he's pretty much similar to everyone else's. I think he's okay. I mean, you know, what he said was, I don't know, pretty unusual, but it was probably just, just him being nervous or trying to impress us. I don't know.

**Rinaldo Nazzaro:** He knows what he's doing enough to find some pretty, like, decent guys that have potential. So, that's great for us.

**Jamila Paksima:** His willingness to recruit for the Base gets the Ecologist a green light.

**Rinaldo Nazzaro:** Yeah. Yeah. I mean, they definitely have, seem like a pretty hardcore militant mindset right, right off the bat. So, I guess it's a thumbs up all around as far as, you know, let him in, and I'll explain to him that, you know, that's how we wanna kind of do it, just keep it a little bit low key as far as our cooperation right now.

**Jamila Paksima:** We identified nine additional neo-nazi group alliances with The Base on these recordings.

**Rinaldo Nazzaro:** I think this is the last one for a couple days and then we only have the guy in Sweden on Saturday. We have a guy in Wisconsin on Friday. Another guy in Arizona who has applied. He's a Marine. He's active duty. So he looks like he might have some potential.

**Jamila Paksima:** Often, the next step after vetting calls are face-to-face meet ups. Once admitted members are invited to practice drills in small groups with firearms where they make more propaganda to distribute online. This was important to Patrik, the Base member who Canadian reporter Ryan Thorpe met in the park.

**Ryan Thorpe:** At one point, he told me that he had been going down to engage in paramilitary training in the United States and that on one occasion he had been turned away at the border and he was specifically disappointed about this 'cause he said, Norman Spear, Roman Wolfe, was going to present him with a Base flag at this, uh, paramilitary training event.

**Jamila Paksima:** Did Patrik talk to you about wanting to do any kind of military training together?

**Ryan Thorpe:** Absolutely, yeah. Very quickly he wanted to begin paramilitary training in Manitoba. He had talked about going to a national park and going deep into the bush and potentially shooting there.

**Jamila Paksima:** At this point, Thorpe knew he wasn't willing to risk going into the woods with an armed Base member. He also had enough material to publish his story.

**Ryan Thorpe:** Oh, it blew up. It blew up. I mean, it, I knew it was going to be a big story, but I didn't think it was going to be as big as it became. We identified him as Master Corporal Patrik Mathews of the Canadian Armed Forces. Hours later, the RCMP raids his home in Beausejour, takes him into custody, and seizes his firearms, and then releases him without charge and then he disappears.

**Jamila Paksima:** The only clue left behind -- Matthews' abandoned red truck.

**Ryan Thorpe:** Holy shit. No one knows where this guy is?

**Jamila Paksima:** In our next episode of *Sounds Like Hate*, find out where fugitive Master Corporal Patrik Mathews is hiding, and what happens when the FBI and ATF visit a 17-year-old Michigan Base member.

**Rinaldo Nazzaro:** We do also have law enforcement that is kind of on the periphery, you know, waiting for us to fuck up somehow, you know, waiting for us to incriminate ourselves. And giving them enough rope to hang us with.

**Geraldine Moriba:** These are complicated stories about people who hold onto false histories and terroristic ideologies -- and draw boundaries that are skin deep.

**Jamila Paksima:** If you or anyone you know has experienced a hate incident or crime, please contact the appropriate local authorities or elected official. You can also document what happened at [splcenter.org/reportthate](https://splcenter.org/reportthate).

**Geraldine Moriba:** This is *Sounds Like Hate*, an independent audio documentary brought to you by the Southern Poverty Law Center. Additional funding comes from the Ring Foundation.

**Jamila Paksima:** Produced by Until 20 Productions. I'm Jamila Paksima.

**Geraldine Moriba:** And I'm Geraldine Moriba. Remember to subscribe to find out when new episodes are released. Please rate and review. It really helps. And thanks for listening.