

Policy Brief

March 2026

Return of the Leader - Robert Rundo's Impact on the Violent Extreme-Right Active Club Network

About CEP: The Counter Extremism Project (CEP) is a non-profit, non-partisan international policy organization founded to address the threat posed by terrorist and extremist ideologies. With offices in New York and Berlin, CEP develops strategies aimed at disrupting the financial, recruitment, and material support networks of violent extremist and terrorist groups. For further information, please visit our [website](#).

Contact info: berlin@counterextremism.com

Alexander Ritzmann is a senior advisor with CEP. He leads the [work](#) of CEP on countering violence-oriented right-wing extremist and terrorist strategies and networks, both offline and online. He also works on effective measures to disrupt violent extremist and terrorist financial strategies.

Introduction

Active Clubs (ACs) are a decentralized, transnational violent network of extreme-right/white supremacist groups that publicly promote combat-sports, fitness training, and white brotherhood.¹ However, their own communications and several documented activities indicate that the AC-strategy actually aims to create a militant network of combat-ready men and small cells.² To avoid early scrutiny by law enforcement, they cultivate a mainstream-friendly fitness aesthetic to “hide in plain sight”.

This paper assesses the main strategic propaganda messages by AC co-founder and figurehead Robert Rundo since his public return in June 2025. Previously, he had served a two-year prison sentence in California for conspiracy to riot after a protracted legal battle involving dismissals, appeals, and extradition from Romania.³ The paper also provides an overview of key violent events associated with the AC network in 2025, the new AC affiliated youth groups, as well as a Classification Framework of what constitutes an AC, designed to aid practitioners, researchers, or law enforcement. In addition, the paper provides recommendations for government prevention and disruption strategies.

The **European** Dimension of the Active Club Network

- Belarus
- Belgium
- Bulgaria
- Denmark
- England
- Estonia
- Finland
- France
- Germany
- Greece
- Hungary
- Ireland
- Italy
- Latvia
- Lithuania
- Netherlands
- Norway
- Poland
- Portugal
- Romania
- Scotland
- Slovenia
- Slovakia
- Spain
- Sweden
- Switzerland



The number of ACs per country varies (see AC Classification Framework below). ACs also exist in North America⁴ and in South America.⁵

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Executive Summary

The public return of AC co-founder and key propagandist Robert Rundo in June 2025 has led to a significant uptake in strategic messaging. His posts and videos serve as de facto leadership guidance without operational command for this “leaderless” movement, signaling what to emphasize and operationalize at the local level. Rundo aims to harmonize and accelerate the AC network’s evolution by reinforcing core strategies (mainstream appearances, fitness, and brotherhood as recruitment, counterculture) while innovating by making infrastructure-building and violence-readiness a central objective. This combined message (lay low, build quietly, harden your community) can shape AC activities across multiple countries, potentially turning a currently loosely connected movement into a more disciplined, goal-driven network. Events in Lyon, France, in February 2026 have prompted a public call for violence-readiness.

Since the network’s creation in 2021, some ACs have demonstrated visible violent or violence-ready activity. Examples in 2025 include an alleged plot in the United States involving firearms and urban assault training foiled by the FBI, hate-crime assaults in Sweden,⁶ and alleged weapons stockpiling in Germany.⁷

There is a significant tension between the AC strategy of avoiding displaying firearms or Nazi-symbols to “hide in plain sight” and the multiple documented instances of members posing with firearms, SS-skulls, and tactical gear since the AC’s founding. Due to the absence of central operational leadership and the diversity of ACs in America and Europe, this can be understood either as disciplinary failures or evolutionary shifts.

Currently, the mapping of the ACs network is done by counting social media and messenger profiles that claim to represent ACs. However, differentiating between different categories of ACs and similar-looking groups based on intent, identity, and activity patterns can support in-depth strategy, activities, and threat assessment.

Key insights from recent official⁸ AC communications include:

- **Promotion of militant action:** The killing of a 23-year-old French alleged right-wing extremist during clashes in Lyon, France, in early 2026 was used by Robert Rundo and affiliated AC channels to frame the death as a turning point. He is justifying violence and reinforcing the AC identity as fascist Blackshirts: *“This is the turning. The nationalists aren’t asking permission anymore. They’re taking the field. From the cathedrals of old Europe to the concrete jungles of American cities, the black shirts rise again, not as cosplay, but as the vanguard.”*⁹

The calling for “*black shirts (to) rise again*” is a long-established violence-promoting narrative by Rundo.¹⁰ Black Shirts were fascist paramilitary units that emerged post-World War I in Italy,¹¹ the United Kingdom,¹² Germany (called Brown Shirts),¹³ and the United States (called Black Legion/Silver Shirts)¹⁴. They were formed to protect fascist leaders and to violently attack political opponents.

- **Infrastructure over spectacle:** Rundo’s new messaging aims to shift the movement’s focus away from episodic, high-visibility stunts toward durable real-world infrastructure: establishing private gyms, businesses, and closed networking events.¹⁵ This reflects a strategic pivot from short-term propaganda wins (“headline activism”) to long-term capacity-building, presented as essential for the movement’s survival and future mobilization.
- **Continued mainstreaming as a strategy:** The continued emphasis on mainstream fitness culture and “brotherhood” content is a calculated tactic, not a sign of moderation.¹⁶ By (almost) looking like ordinary fitness clubs, ACs aim to reduce law-enforcement attention and broaden recruitment, all while quietly promoting extremist ideology and combat readiness for potential future violence.
- **The emergence of “Youth Active Clubs” and youth-focused propaganda:** Recognizing that recruiting the next generation is critical for longevity, AC propagandists have tailored their messaging and infrastructure also to teenagers and very young adults.

Policy Recommendations for Prevention and Disruption

Treating ACs as combat-sports clubs or as mostly online propaganda groups would be a critical mistake. Their core strength lies in localized, real-world (offline) social networks that can rapidly activate members for targeted violence. A failure to recognize and monitor the associated “infrastructure of extremism”, e.g. private training facilities, movement-run businesses, will limit prevention efforts.

In counter-terrorism terms, ACs can function as incubators, expanding the pool of radicalized, physically capable, violence-ready individuals. When or if a faction or member/associate decides “it’s time,” they can draw on that pool. The unevenness of current violence (some clubs are violent, others are not) should not breed complacency; it may simply reflect that different chapters are at different stages on a potential escalation ladder.

Recommendations:

- **Update threat assessments:** Governments should account for the new AC focus on infrastructure and violence-readiness by expanding monitoring to local AC participation in violent events, as well as physical venues and economic activities. Particular attention should be paid to a possible increase in violent crimes in the areas where ACs are active, even if these crimes are not initially recognizable as politically motivated. While many right-wing extremist attackers leave manifestos after attacks, violence by ACs will likely remain hidden until their Day X¹⁷ is declared.

- **Enhance cross-border intelligence sharing and joint tracking:** ACs network internationally, and so should governments. When there's an indication of transnational meetups, use mechanisms like passenger name record (PNR) analysis and watchlisting to flag and share these movements.
- **Engage with the fitness community and venues as partners:** Gym owners, martial arts instructors, and combat-sport event organizers should be seen as allies. Governments (through law enforcement outreach or sporting federations) should provide discreet briefings about ACs' modus operandi, including regular updates.
- **Avoid stigmatizing lawful sport and association:** Policies must be careful not to cast a net so wide as to infringe on civil liberties or antagonize communities unnecessarily. Setting clear criteria (as in the suggested Classification Framework) for what constitutes an AC can help here.
- **Establish an escalation ladder for threat response:** Not all AC activity warrants the same response; a spectrum approach is needed. By calibrating response to activity, authorities avoid under- or over-reacting.
- **Prioritize monitoring and potential disruption** of dedicated venues and network-linked enterprises. *(For more information, please contact CEP)*

Robert Rundo's Post-Release Strategic Messaging

Rundo's release from U.S. custody in December 2024 and return to active propaganda in June 2025 has been a galvanizing moment for the AC scene. His legal saga of being prosecuted and imprisoned for his role in violent political clashes has been woven into the movement's narrative of "repression breeds resilience".¹⁸ Within AC channels, Rundo is portrayed as a martyr-figure whose sacrifice validates the need for smarter tactics. This narrative is used to justify the adaptive measures (keeping a low profile, building infrastructure) as a way to survive government interventions.¹⁹

Rundo's messaging since June 2025 has been both a continuation of prior AC doctrine and an innovation in focus areas. As a decentralized network, ACs lack formal hierarchy, so Rundo's statements function as influential guidance across AC chapters. His recent communications can be distilled into several key themes:

- **The turning point to violence:** Following the killing of a 23-year-old French alleged right-wing extremist in Lyon in February 2026, Robert Rundo had framed the victim as a martyr and justification for militant resurgence. Rundo described the killing as "the turning" point that signaled the end of polite politics and the rise of physical confrontation.²⁰

Quentin didn't die for memes. He died standing guard, one against the mob, because he believed in something worth bleeding for. His blood on the Lyon pavement is the sacrament now, proof that the old rules are dead. The left's utopia of melting pots and money-worship is cracking everywhere, exporting its gang wars and tribal knives to places that used to be safe.

This is the turning. The nationalists aren't asking permission anymore. They're taking the field. From the cathedrals of old Europe to the concrete jungles of American cities, the black shirts rise again, not as cosplay, but as the vanguard.

Quentin's name echoes in every chant, every march. Honor him by becoming what he fought for: men who train, who act, who forge the legion.

Will2Rise Substack post (2026)²¹

The calling for "*black shirts (to) rise again*" is a long-established violence-promoting narrative by Rundo.²² Black Shirts were fascist paramilitary units that emerged post-World War I in Italy,²³ the United Kingdom,²⁴ Germany (called Brown Shirts),²⁵ and the United States (called Black Legion/Silver Shirts)²⁶. They were formed to protect fascist leaders and to violently attack political opponents.

Analysis: The narrative serves as a clear rhetorical escalation: it justified street violence as a defensive necessity, positioned the AC model as the solution, and was widely circulated in AC-linked channels across Europe and the U.S. Though not directly tied

to ACs, the event became a transnational propaganda catalyst and reinforced the group's call to violence-readiness.

On March 15, 2026, the AC official Substack profile claimed that ACs are not even about self-defense: *“Effective self-defense and proficiency in hand-to-hand fighting is not the aim of Active Clubs, but it’s a useful side-effect that develops naturally within individuals and clubs’ sans intention; therefore, not premeditative and not engineered toward the initiation of racial or religious violence regardless of what some individuals posit.”*²⁷

“White Nationalism 3.0” and mainstreaming: Before the incident in Lyon, Rundo reiterated the importance of a clean-cut, mainstream-friendly appearance. This is a continuity of the AC strategy white nationalism “3.0”:²⁸ avoid overt neo-Nazi or skinhead trappings while promoting hyper-masculine self-improvement, camaraderie, and cultural traditionalism. *Analysis:* By downplaying obvious extremist symbols and activities, Rundo’s guidance aims to reduce early law-enforcement pressure and maximize recruitment pools.

- **Infrastructure over spectacle:** A novel emphasis in Rundo’s post-prison messaging is a call to build “real-world roots” and infrastructure. In a widely circulated New Year 2026 message, he is instructing ACs to prioritize securing dedicated gyms, housing, movement-owned businesses, and regular private gatherings.



On 2025 vs. 2026 for the Active Clubs:

2025 was the breakout year pushing the clubs hard into the mainstream, growing numbers, getting our name out there, making noise that couldn't be ignored.

2026 is the year we solidify everything we gained. Time to build real structure. Clubs need to step up: rent dedicated gyms, launch businesses, host more private events. Turn each club into a true hub part of a nationwide network that stands on its own. No more loose circles. We become the infrastructure. We need real-world roots: nationalist-owned businesses, housing, gyms, private events, the whole network. The online milieu is growing apathetic and fractured. In the end, the most organized, the most coherent, the ones with actual structure on the ground they're the ones who win.

Build in reality. The future belongs to those who show up.

AC x OFFICIAL account, Telegram, 2026

Analysis: Rundo is setting a management agenda for the network: he wants ACs to evolve from loosely affiliated groups into community institutions. This guidance was well received by followers (e.g., multiple AC channels echoed and reposted the “2026: Year of Structure” message)

- **Parallel economy and self-sufficiency:** Rundo’s communications frame economic and logistical self-reliance as core to the movement’s future. He promotes the creation of small businesses owned and operated by movement members. *Analysis:* The pitch is, in Rundo’s eyes, pragmatic: shared workplaces and enterprises keep members in daily contact, build trust, generate revenue, and reduce reliance on “system”-owned infrastructure. Rundo had promoted the concept of parallel economy and self-sufficiency before,²⁹ but elevates it now to a primary 2026 project, envisioning a nationwide (and transnational) network of businesses as an alternative ecosystem.
- **Transatlantic cross-pollination:** Rundo explicitly encourages U.S. ACs to learn from European extreme-right subcultures. In a January 2026 post, he argued European movements are more durable because they grew from offline venues like pubs, fight nights, and social clubs, only later leveraging the internet.³⁰ *Analysis:* He frames Europe’s dense network of countercultural spaces as a model for the U.S., essentially urging American right-wing extremists to create similar “scene” density and everyday social hubs. This narrative functions both as inspiration and as instruction.

In summary, Rundo’s strategic messaging since his public reappearance in mid-2025 aims to harmonize and accelerate the AC network’s evolution. He has reinforced core tactics (mainstream appearances, fitness-as-recruitment, counterculture) while innovating by making infrastructure-building and self-sufficiency the central objectives. This combined message (lay low, build quietly, harden your community) is shaping AC activities across multiple countries, potentially turning a once loosely connected movement into a more disciplined, goal-driven network. After the events in Lyon in February 2026, Rundo has added a public call for violence-readiness.

Active Clubs: Militias hiding in plain sight?

ACs should not be read as ordinary (extreme-right) combat-sports groups. In 2023, Robert Rundo describes the network as “... *the leaderless resistance, when all these clubs are engaging in the same kind of style activism, pushing for similar goals, those create a unified front, and it doesn’t even need a leader to it. It’s kind of like the minutemen in the early stages of the revolutionary war. There were different bands of minutemen in the different states but they acted all in conjunction with each other.*”³¹ The minutemen were a citizen militia during the American Revolutionary War, ready for military duty “at a minute’s warning.”³²

Also in 2023, Rundo referenced Josef Goebbels, Reichsminister for “Public Enlightenment and Propaganda” in Nazi Germany, and glorified Goebbels’ attempt to take over Berlin in the 1920s with 600 brown-shirted Sturmabteilung (SA) men.³³ Rundo highlighted the importance of organizing men for and with a purpose. The SA was recruiting unemployed, working-class men, preferably veterans of World War I, for targeted political violence.

There is a significant tension between the AC strategy of avoiding displaying firearms or Nazi-symbols to “hide in plain sight” and the multiple documented instances of members posing with firearms, SS-skulls, and tactical gear since the AC’s founding. Due to the absence of central operational leadership and the diversity of ACs network, this can be understood either as disciplinary failures or evolutionary shifts.



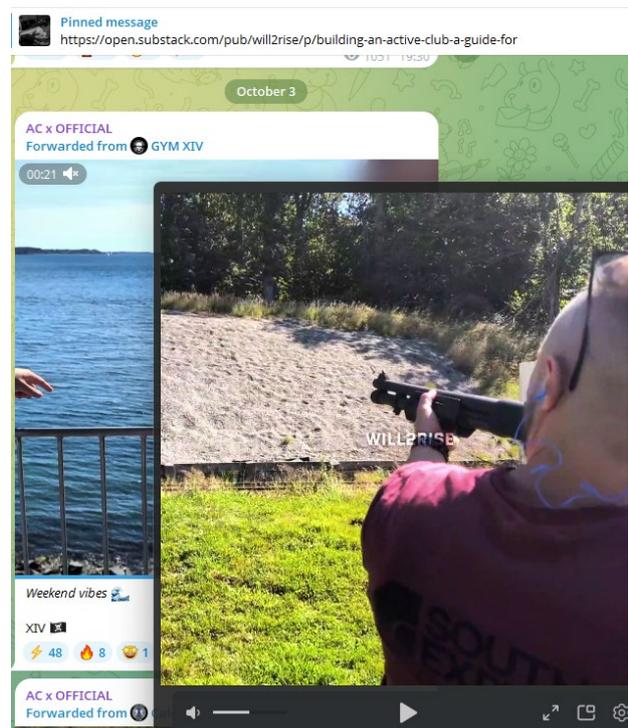
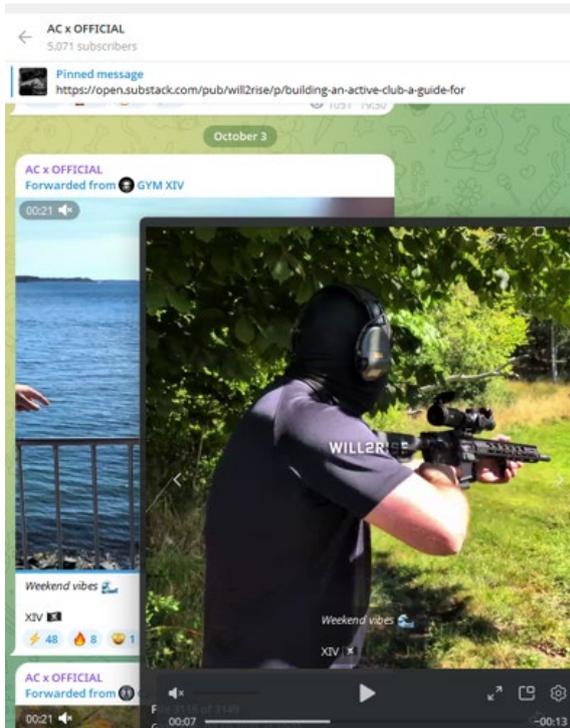
Active Club mainstream propaganda, Telegram, 2022



Heartland Active Club (Missouri) during a militia training, Telegram, May 2023, using SS-Skulls.³⁴



AC x OFFICIAL account, Telegram, 2024. Self-documenting any training with weapons or displaying Nazi symbols is considered a violation of the “hiding in plain sight” AC strategy.



Alleged Swedish AC sympathizers/members training with firearms, October 2025, Telegram, shared by the official AC x OFFICIAL account.

Rundo highlighted the real objective of street activism as training for operational capacity, which would also be necessary for a militia to be effective: “A lot of people don’t understand, but doing activism does really give you skills like coordination, planning, leadership, following rules and directions, getting guys in and out of places. For a night of stenciling or a banner drop, guys have to learn how to coordinate so they don’t get arrested, get spotted by opponents, that they get in and out of there safely.”³⁵

These skills are much more needed for building operational and tactical capacities for a militia than for a combat-sports club. Also, compared to non-AC extreme-right fight clubs in Europe, the combat-sports skill level displayed in their own propaganda is often underwhelming. The official AC propaganda videos of tournaments and fights on Telegram mostly display a low skill level of the featured fighters. There are also discussions about the lack of skills in the comment sections of some of the AC-Telegram channels:³⁶

i appreciate the passion and energy but we need to get a solid foundation before we have an actual fight. The absolute lack of technique is not safe for both men.

21:

let's give each other brain damage instead doing something better for White race. Right

edited 17:

Telegram, 2025



Tactical Casualty Care training by the Arizona AC, Telegram, 2023,



Bluffwoods active club went to the range!

We had instruction and fun with an elephant gun, some WW2 vintage, and some modern pieces.

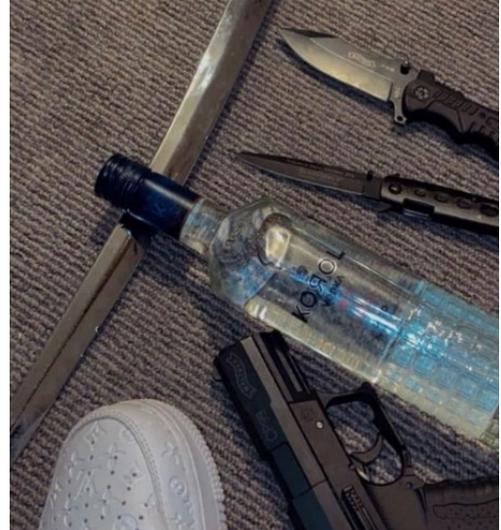
Join us for the next outing!

Telegram, 2023



Posted by individuals associated with the AC Ostwestfalen (Germany), Instagram, 2025

Posted by individuals associated with the AC Ostwestfalen, Instagram, 2025



In summary, the increasing number of cases where AC-associated individuals are self-documenting or are being exposed preparing for violent acts involving weapons (including firearms) supports the assessment that the actual objective of the AC strategy is not to conduct combat-sports, but to prepare for militia-style targeted violence.

Readiness is the first step. Make an active club or join an active club. Then turn it to a militia when the lights go out.

Comment on Will2Rise, Substack (2024)

Violence-Related Incidents in 2025

The AC model's foundational goal should be understood as to creating a "stand-by" militia ready to deploy violence when they deem the time right.³⁷ Fitness and combat training are not ends in themselves, but a means to produce cohesive, ideologically aligned men prepared for future action. Recent incidents in 2025 and early 2026 underscore how this latent violence potential can move into action, with varying triggers and degrees of coordination. Below are incidents and indicators of escalation associated with ACs:

- **Germany** (Weapons Seizure, October 2025): On 1 October 2025, police raids in North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) targeted suspected members or affiliates of AC Ostwestfalen, focusing on illegal weapons possession.³⁸ Authorities seized an array of weaponry, including knives, a machete, a crossbow with bolts, an air rifle, a handgun (currently unclear if this was a live firearm), and airsoft guns. This cache suggests a cell moving beyond unarmed combat training. *Analysis:* While no immediate attack was reported, the stockpiling of weapons indicates preparation for violence.
- **United States** (Fight Night and Assault, September 2025): An AC-organized fight event in San Diego brought together members from multiple chapters for a combat-sports tournament. Shortly after, members of one participating chapter allegedly took part in an assault in Huntington Beach, CA.³⁹ *Analysis:* The fight night itself illustrates AC infrastructure in action (a closed gathering to build combat skills and inter-chapter bonds). The alleged subsequent assault shows how these events can translate into real-world violence.
- **United States** (Planning of paramilitary urban assault, 2025): In an FBI undercover operation spanning 2025, agents infiltrated a network allegedly tied to a Tennessee AC node.⁴⁰ According to a federal criminal complaint, members of this milieu discussed building a paramilitary "urban assault" unit and plotted to obtain illegal firearms, including fully-automatic weapons with serial numbers removed. An undercover FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF) officer first met with the main suspect in June 2025, who requested help with planning paramilitary training in preparation to hit multiple "high value targets" and train a team of others "within a year or two".⁴¹ Arrests were made in January 2026, resulting in federal firearms conspiracy charges. *Analysis:* This case indicates that at least some U.S. AC associates progressed to advanced planning for terrorism. It highlights the potential for a domestic terrorism scenario originating from the broader AC network.
- **Sweden** (Hate Crime Assaults, August 2025): In late August, members associated with Aktivklubb Sverige carried out a spree of racially motivated assaults in Stockholm.⁴² At least three people were attacked based on perceived ethnicity. Swedish courts treated the case as hate crimes, and it culminated in convictions with prison sentences. *Analysis:* This is reportedly the first major prosecution spotlighting the AC milieu in Sweden, indicating the authorities recognized the ideological nature of the violence.

- **Sweden** (Firearms Training Video, October 2025): Gym XIV / Aktivklubb Sverige posted a Telegram video showing individuals conducting live-fire training with an AR-15 rifle and a shotgun.⁴³ The footage was shared by the main AC x OFFICIAL channel and other AC-linked channels. *Analysis:* While not an act of violence, this capability demonstration is a high-salience warning sign. It shows an AC is progressing to paramilitary-style training with firearms, a qualitative escalation from mere weightlifting or boxing.
- **United Kingdom** (Undercover Footage, February 2025): An ITV News investigation infiltrated AC London and captured members discussing being “weapon ready” for confrontation, talking about “taking out” targets if attacked, stockpiling crossbows and knives, and planning to rent a dedicated indoor space for training.⁴⁴ One AC member was arrested as a result of the investigation for a parole violation due to a previous sentencing for a violent hate crime.⁴⁵ *Analysis:* These discussions and incidents highlight intent and preemptive preparation for violence.

Overall trend: These incidents show a spectrum from preparatory actions (training, arming) to actual violence (assaults, vigilante crimes). Not every AC will escalate to violent attacks against political opponents immediately, indeed many stick to propaganda and fitness initially. However, the network effect is concerning: members and affiliates gain combat skills and propagate narratives of violent self-defense, making them more capable and potentially willing to engage in violence given the right trigger. Moreover, the existence of transnational ties, e.g. European and American members attending joint combat-sport events, or sharing tactics online, can spread violent tactics quickly across borders.

Escalation dynamics: Rundo’s emphasis on building infrastructure matters for violence risk. Physical infrastructure (such as dedicated gyms or clubhouses) can lower the friction for moving into violent action. Such spaces allow private tactical training, planning away from prying eyes, and storage of weapons. Even if many members join just for fitness or social reasons initially, the environment can normalize violent extremist rhetoric and can progressively mobilize individuals to violence.

In counter-terrorism terms, ACs can function as incubators, expanding the pool of radicalized, physically capable individuals. When or if a faction or member decides “it’s time,” they can draw on that pool. The unevenness of current violence (some clubs/affiliates act violently, others do not) should not breed complacency; it may simply reflect that different chapters are at different stages on a potential escalation ladder.

While publicly claiming to be mostly about sports and brotherhood, the AC x OFFICIAL Telegram channel has promoted the assessment of the author of this paper that the AC strategy is actually aiming to create a shadow militia:

AC x OFFICIAL
5,488 subscribers

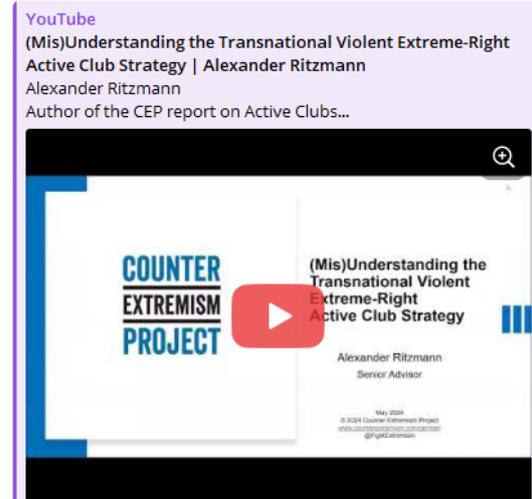


Telegram Post by the main AC x OFFICIAL channel, April 2025.

The Active Club is still in its infancy, yet look at the ground it has covered! Witness the gatherings that unite hundreds of men in a positive, meaningful way. To everyone involved in an Active Club or the 3.0 movement: you're not just participants; you're part of the most significant nationalist network in decades, standing at the very beginning of something monumental.

What you make of this opportunity will depend on how ready you are to embrace it. ACTION TODAY, VICTORY TOMORROW!"

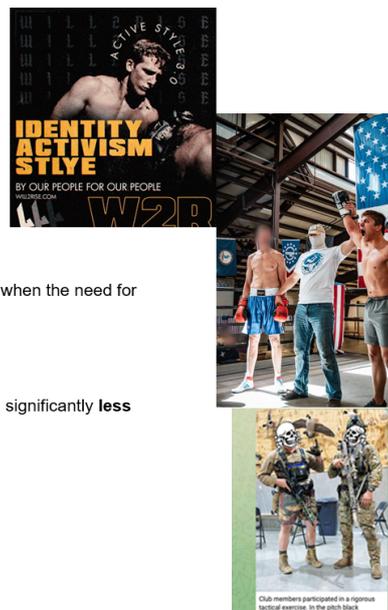
<https://youtu.be/8FhX1cFm9jM?feature=shared>



Slide 1 of the CEP YouTube presentation promoted by the AC x OFFICIAL channel above⁴⁶

Key Points

- **Largest VRWE network (100+ chapters)**
- **A NEW strategy - Hiding in plain sight!**
- **Objective 1 (U.S.):** Creation of a **RWE shadow militia** that can be activated when the need for coordinated **violent action on a larger scale** arises (Day X).
- **Objective 2:** **Avoid or withstand law enforcement interventions** by looking significantly **less dangerous** and less relevant *in comparison to other RWE actors*
- **Objective 3:** **Grow the network**, in particular from the general public.
- Active Clubs are **not about combat sports** but aim to **fool law enforcement**.



AC Youth Clubs: “Whoever captures the youth, captures the future”

Another significant development in 2025 has been the emergence of Youth ACs and youth-focused propaganda streams affiliated with the AC network. Recognizing that recruiting the next generation is critical for longevity, AC ideologues have tailored their messaging and infrastructure to teenagers and very young adults:

- **Youth-branded clubs:** Several chapters launched what they explicitly call “Youth” wings or offshoots. These are often framed as fitness or self-improvement groups for teens, sharing workout videos, martial arts inspiration, and extremist memes targeted at high-school age.⁴⁷
- **Lifestyle and aesthetics as bait:** One main tactic of the AC strategy has been the use of “aesthetics” in social media channels that package extreme-right masculinity as an appealing lifestyle. “White Lads Aesthetics” serves as the main stylistic feeder into the network.⁴⁸ It posts imagery of fit young men, motivational quotes about discipline, nostalgic/romantic depictions of tradition, quotes by philosophers, etc., with subtle underlying racial or militant cues. This can be understood as a soft-to-hard radicalization pipeline: Start by attracting apolitical fitness enthusiasts or disaffected young men with cultural/gym content, then gradually introduce them to harder nationalist and neo-Nazi ideas once they’ve joined a local club or private chat.
- **Youth clubs as a strategic vehicle for attracting younger recruits:** In a January 2026 podcast, Rundo presents youth clubs as a strategic vehicle for attracting younger recruits, building a distinct counterculture, and targeting young men in their own age cohort. He states the central premise explicitly: “whoever captures the youth, captures the future”,⁴⁹ a quote by Adolf Hitler.⁵⁰ Youth-oriented channels and content are framed as essential to this effort, especially where they align with the current media environment and youth zeitgeist. In the podcast, this is illustrated through praise for a small AC youth Telegram channel that mixes “hype videos” with contemporary style and platform logic. Younger activists are assigned a particular role in keeping the movement culturally relevant by producing content, adapting to new trends, identifying resonant music and formats, and expanding visibility across platforms such as TikTok and other youth-facing platforms.
- **Emphasis on discipline:** Rundo stresses that youth participation should be disciplined rather than reckless. Younger members are described as enthusiastic and willing, but also prone to unnecessary risk-taking.⁵¹ The recommended outlet for this impulse, Rundo says, is not activism in the sense of uncontrolled confrontation, but physical training, especially combat-sports. Boxing and similar disciplines are presented as the appropriate channel through which young men should test themselves, develop toughness, and cultivate resilience. Rundo argues that this kind of controlled hardship is sufficient risk exposure in itself and that it builds confidence, self-possession, and readiness for later life. Rundo suggests that youth clubs are envisioned as structures that combine recruitment, subcultural production, discipline, and the early socialization of young men into a wider extreme-right (violent) activist milieu.

Introducing an AC Classification Framework

Currently, the mapping of the ACs network is done by counting social media and messenger profiles that claim to represent ACs. However, differentiating between different categories of ACs and similar-looking groups based on intent, identity, and activity patterns can support in-depth strategy, activities, and threat assessment. This is relevant because the AC founders, who advocate for the creation of a covert militia that appears to be a sports group (see above), make that distinction.⁵² The table below is designed to aid practitioners, researchers, or law enforcement in this regard.

Category	Key Characteristics	If-Then Classification Rule
Category 1: Confirmed Active Club	Publicly uses AC branding and "3.0" framing. Shows sustained offline training (Mixed Martial Arts/MMA, lifting) and documented street activism. Content is frequently validated/reposted by central hubs like AC x OFFICIAL.	If a group uses AC branding, shows regular offline activity, and is amplified by the central network, then classify as Category 1.
Category 2: Aspiring / Wannabe	Uses AC symbols and narratives online. Lacks evidence of consistent offline activity, physical infrastructure, or "real-world" activism.	If a group adopts the aesthetic but lacks a verified offline presence, then classify as Category 2.
Category 3: AC-Adjacent (High Risk)	Shares similar aesthetics and training (MMA/Hiking) but avoids specific AC branding. May follow different ideological anchors like accelerationism or neo-Nazism.	If a group mimics the "3.0" style without the AC identity, then classify as Category 3.
Category 4: Legacy extreme-right Combat- Sports	Focuses on tournaments and legacy scene-building. Often displays an intimidating, overt extremist appearance (tattoos, symbols) that violates the "3.0" mainstreaming-optics strategy.	If a group prioritizes public spectacle and legacy subcultures over discreet cell-building, then classify as Category 4.

Edge cases: The AC strategy also allows for one-person ACs, either as a start-up or if there are no opportunities to recruit more members. Some ACs have dropped the AC label (e.g. AC Scotland), possibly to reduce scrutiny by authorities, but they continue their activities. Some groups have partially integrated the AC label, but have not adopted the AC 3.0 model fully (e.g. Sons of Hengist).

(Mis)Understanding the transnational violent extreme-right Active Club Strategy

Many extreme right-wing groups/parties

Fitness, combat sports, outdoor activities like hiking

Often include women or have groups for wives/girlfriends of the male members

Central command, classic hierarchical leadership

Publicly display swastikas and Hitler-salutes, open admiration of National-Socialist Germany

Antisemitism is a priority in their propaganda

Posing with (fire)arms, doing militia/military style trainings

Open political activities

Active Clubs U.S. Strategy

Fitness, combat sports, outdoor activities like hiking

Rarely include women

Open network with no central leadership, operationally independent groups

No publicly display of swastikas and Hitler-salutes, no open references to National-Socialist Germany

Antisemitism is not a priority in their propaganda

Militia/military style trainings are conducted in secret, no public posing with firearms, even if legal

No significant political activities

Endnotes

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